

# 2016 GEAR GUIDE

# skiing

FIRST CHAIR TO LAST CALL

## BEST GEAR OF THE YEAR

SKIS, BOOTS, JACKETS, PANTS,  
GLOVES, PACKS, GOGGLES  
& HELMETS

# 285

GAZILLION  
PRODUCT  
REVIEWS

**PLUS**  
GETTING INTO  
CHRISTINA  
LUSTI'S KIT



skiing  
magazine

SKI OF THE YEAR

- 2016 -

**SHRINKED AND PINKED?**  
THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN'S SKIS

**TRIBAL TRAILS**  
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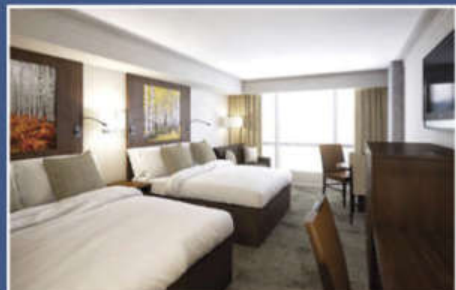
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## FOCUS

**ON THE RAILS**

On a mission to steal some snow from an ice rink in Viljandi, Estonia, photographer Roman “Vanaisa” Neimann got inspired to shoot. He recruited athlete Timo Jeeger to build the kicker, a job that took him two days. After well over 10 attempts to get the shot, Neimann and Jeeger went back to the drawing board. The solution? Jeeger just needed to jump higher. Three days and one broken finger later, the dream team got this epic frame. —**LESLIE HITTMEIER**

*Timo Jeeger in Viljandi, Estonia,  
by Roman “Vanaisa” Neimann*







**JUST IN TIME**

With 20 new inches overnight and no sign it was letting up, photographer Adam Barker told Carlo Travarelli to blast the pillow, stay tight, and get some snow moving. "Carlo is a seasoned vet and as per the norm, he got 'er done," Barker said. Right after they captured the image, Barker's camera battery promptly died. He'd forgotten to pack a second, so he drove 30 minutes each way to retrieve one. "We all have those absent-minded moments at times—glad this one didn't cost me the shot."

—LESLIE HITTMEIER

*Carlo Travarelli at Solitude Mountain Resort, Utah, by Adam Barker*





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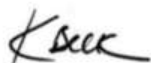
# GEARING UP

**GEAR. I NEVER KNEW MUCH ABOUT IT.** Which might have had more to do with my ski-bum finances than anything else. (But I did, and still do, love the innuendos it inspires. See page 72.) But when I walked into this job over a decade ago, owning one pair of original K2 Phat Luvs I bought from a friend in Jackson who'd moved to Chicago for a "real" job, I had to learn why a ski or boot performs the way it does. A few years in, it felt like a few wires in my brain got connected to the right screws, and the fan started whirring. Sure, you can be a good skier without good gear knowledge, but having it makes you better. Smarter. More analytical. And, naturally, better-looking.

Gear. As skiers, it documents our lives, really. For me, it all started at Christmas in 1981, when instead of the make-your-own perfume set I asked for, I got a pair of red Rossis with the rooster on top, hidden until the fateful morning under my mom's bed with a big red bow on the tip. My adolescence was shaped by my brother's way-too-long hand-me-down K2 KVC Comps, which I kept in my bedroom next to the poster of Scot Schmidt from *The Blizzard of Aahhh's* (also a hand-me-down). The skis had sections of missing and compressed edges, which I wore proudly on the outside, and I tore every muscle fiber in my body each weekend trying to keep up with my brother and his mulleted rat pack. Later came the Dynastar Big Extreme Lines I bought at Sniagrab before I moved to Jackson, and they gifted me with the powder-skiing enlightenment around which my life continues to revolve. Then there were the skinny Atomic Beta something-or-others with Dynafit bindings and ill-fitting AT boots I bought off my boss's wife, which gave me freedom (and blisters) in the backcountry's glittering aprons. Then, during my first ski test at this magazine, trying out carving skis with World Cup tunes and diamond-stone touch-ups between runs, I found my final missing link to this sport. Those skis taught me that with the right tools, there is no such thing as a lame run. A hundred hot laps on the early-season white strip of death? So. Much. Fun.

Gear. It makes us who we are. If Santa had brought me that perfume set, where would I be now? Probably in Chicago, working some real job.

This year we bring you more reviews than ever before. It's simple: The stuff is just really that good. Whoever said material objects can't make you happy must not have been a skier.



KIMBERLY BEEKMAN  
editor@skiingmag.com



Katie Van Riper puts her gear to use at Snowbird, Utah, where our ski-test magic happens.



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## FEATURES

## 48 GEAR GUIDE 2016

Welcome to the best gear guide in the industry. We test and review this season's top new skis and boots objectively, which means our opinions are never paid for. (It's the strict part of our otherwise loose moral compass.) Read up, buy now, and go shred.

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On Montana's Chippewa Cree reservation, the slopes of Bear Paw serve a higher purpose.  
By Drew Pogue

### CORRECTION

From Sam Bass in regards to the Sugarloaf writeup in the Mountain Guide: "I don't know how to play a single card game, including solitaire. It's backgammon I play in the bathroom."

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### ON THE COVER:

Nordica's Enforcer is our Ski of the Year. Also awesome: Smith's I/O Goggle and Rossi's Allspeed Elite 130 boot. Photograph by Keri Bascetta.

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TO KNOW FROM  
ACROSS THE  
SKIING WORLD

# FRONT SIDE

## PURGATORY BY THE NUMBERS

14

Resorts on the Power Pass

10

Improvements, in millions of dollars,  
to Purg and sister resorts

5

Ride time (minutes) on Purg's new lift

3

New trails for the 2015-16 season

## DESTINATIONS

### PURGATORY, COLORADO

NEW OWNERS PLUCK THIS REMOTE SKI RESORT OUT OF LIMBO WITH SERIOUS MOUNTAIN UPGRADES.

Things are happening in southwest Colorado. And it's about time. Purgatory turns 50 this winter, and it gets new owners for its birthday (and a name change from Durango Mountain Resort back to its original moniker). James Coleman bought the resort earlier this year and is pouring \$10 million into trail, lift, and snowmaking upgrades there and at his other three regional hills: Sipapu, Arizona Snowbowl, and Pajarito. At Purg, a new high-speed quad replaces Lift 8 and will fly skiers to the summit in just under five minutes. Also look for two new trails off of Ray's

Ridge and an intermediate run from the old midway loading dock to the base. Snowbowl is the recipient of its first new lift in 30 years, Humphreys Peak quad, and its signature trail, Ridge—from which you can take in sweeping views of that famous northern-Arizona canyon—is wider and better graded. The four resorts unite under the Power Pass this season: unlimited skiing at each hill, plus three days at a whole bunch more, including Taos, Copper, Crested Butte, Monarch, and Grand Targhee. Intrigued? More here: [purgatoryresort.com](http://purgatoryresort.com).

Salomon uses the backcountry as a testing ground for new technology.

# 2016 GEAR HIGHLIGHTS

SICK OF HEARING HOW EVERYTHING IS LIGHTER YET STRONGER? TOO BAD. BUT SOME GEAR TRENDS—AND NEW PRODUCTS—DESERVE ATTENTION.

By Joe Cutts

Game changers, paradigm shifters...they don't come along *every* year, and this year brings no obviously earth-shaking gear innovation. That said, there's cool new stuff. For our money, the juiciest trend is Salomon's WTR boot-sole program. It's now an official norm adopted by, of all brands, Rossignol. If two snooty French competitors can work together to convince the skeptics that alpine boots should have rockered soles, we're listening.



## ► ROCKERED SOLES FOR ALPINERS

Is WTR (Walk to Ride) legit? Two monster brands, Rossi and Salomon (like, a third of the U.S. market), are pimping it hard. Rocker makes a WTR boot sole easy to walk on, and its hard-plastic binding interface drives the ski in a way poor old Vibram just can't. Any Salomon MNC binding can accommodate the higher (not as high as AT) toe. Now Rossi's in the game with dual-norm (alpine/WTR) versions of key Rossi and Look models—even bro bindings like Rossi's **FKS 140** (shown).



## ► BACKCOUNTRY BULLIES

Tough times for the mountain-goat brands. Scarpa, Dynafit, BD, et al. had a nice, quiet little segment, but big-brand bullies continue to encroach, sometimes with aggressive prices. Salomon doesn't even see backcountry as a moneymaker; it's more a testing ground for new technology (what race once was) and a cool brand-image thing. Shown: **Salomon MTN Lab**, a backcountry freeride boot (3.5 pounds) and **Marker Kingpin**, a step-in tech binding for "adjacent backcountry" (don't call it "sidecountry").

## THREE BOOTS THAT CAUGHT OUR ATTENTION

**1.** The **Hammer**, a new three-piece from **Head**, wants to appeal to younger skiers. **2.** The **Descendant 8** from **Full Tilt**: finally, a cabrio for fat feet (102-mm last). **3.** **Nordica's** new **Dobermann GP** is all badass and back to basics.







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📷 Wendy Fisher gets an out-of-bounds experience,  
inside the ropes, just above Morning Glory. Photo: Tom Stillo

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### FIVE SKIS THAT CAUGHT OUR ATTENTION

**1. K2** concentrates mass over the edges in the new “perimeter-weighted” iKonic series (shown: **iKonic 85Ti**). **2. Völkl** makes them thick down the middle with its new 3D Ridge construction (shown: **100Eight**).

**3. Armada’s Invictus** series had testers raving (shown: **Invictus 89Ti**). **4. Nordica’s Enforcer** had them frothing and raving. **5. Eric Pollard’s** latest graphic, on his new **Line Mordecai**, is predictably masterful.

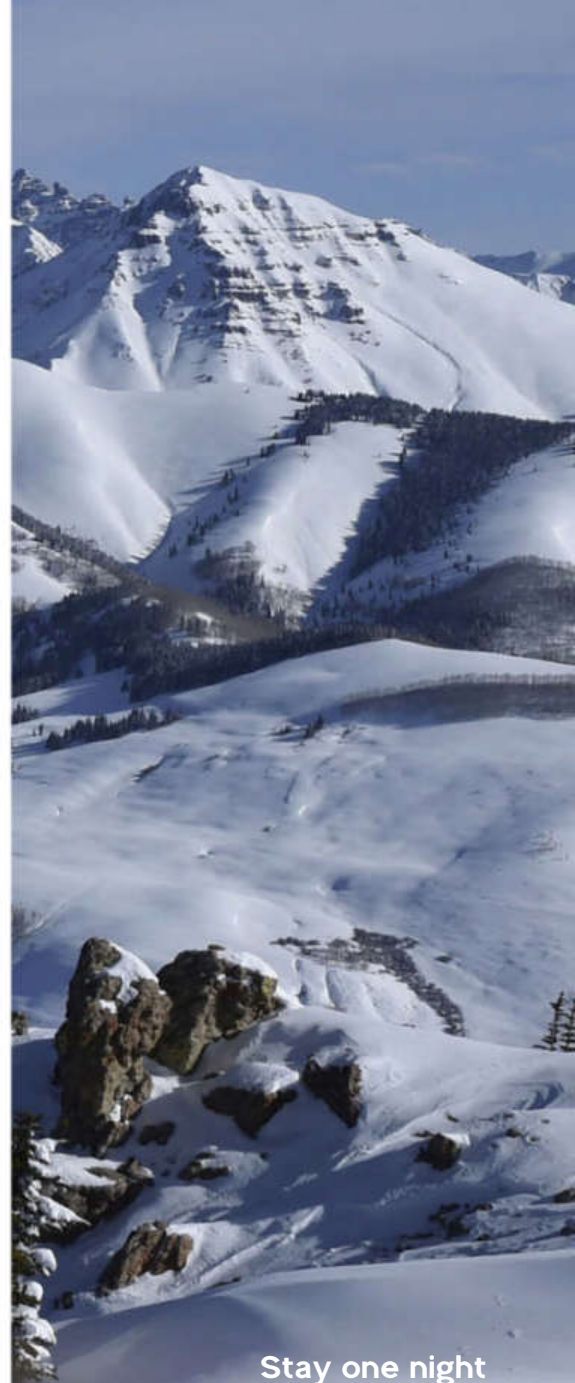


### ► SCHRALP NOW, PAY LATER

No dough? No worries. J knows you’re good for it. That’s Jason Levinthal, founder of Line, now supreme leader of crowdsourced, direct-to-consumer J Skis. So you can ski now and pay in installments. Which is crazy, because whenever we front you any money you forget to pay it back. **Shown: The Vacation OCP.**

### ► SAY IT PROUD: CARVING IS...FUN?

They’re “scooter skis”: fun to ride, but don’t let your friends catch you. A.k.a. beer-league racers or, worse, “carving skis.” One of the most incredible rides at the test this year, **Atomic’s Redster Doubledeck XT** (shown, far right), barely made it in the top 10 of its category because it lacks versatility. It’s exhausting, unforgiving, edgy...and a gas on flat, hard snow. It and other “citizen racers” are extreme examples of a general narrowing of waists this year—refreshing, reboundy, camber-rich palate cleansers in the fat and rockered era. They will pump you up. **Shown: Blizzard SRC Racing, Salomon X-Race.**



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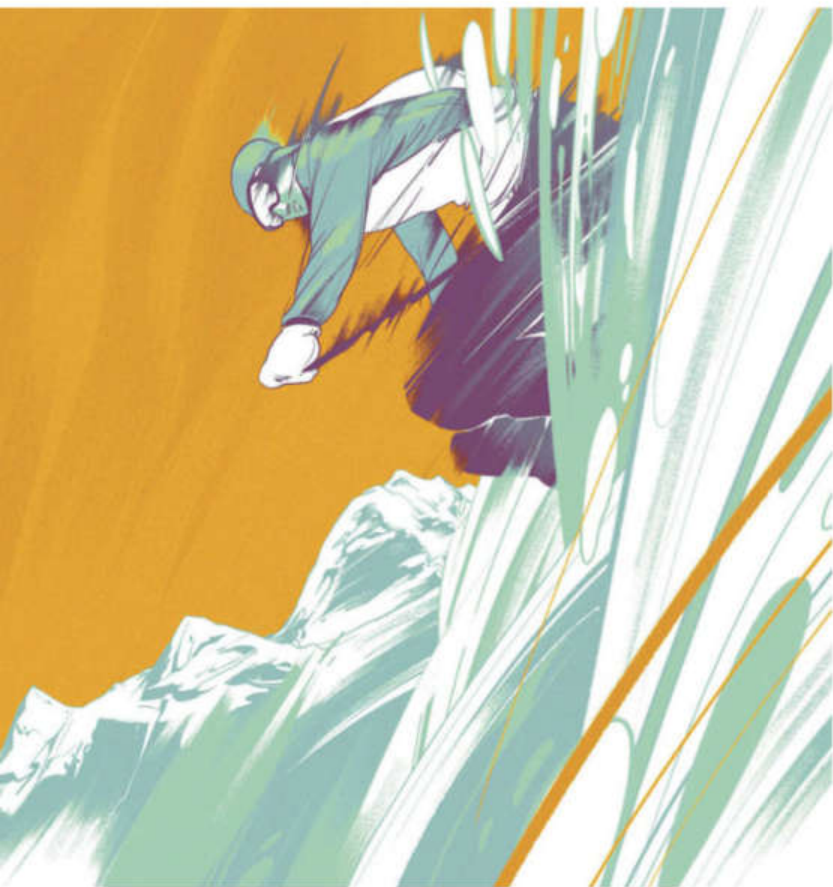
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MOUNTAIN RESORT



## DROPPING IN

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF KARL MOLITOR

WHAT IF YOU WERE THE FASTEST SKIER ALIVE BUT COULDN'T SHOW ANYONE?

By Rob Story

**D**amn Nazis. Were it not for Hitler—not to mention Mussolini and Hirohito and all their warmongering ilk—Karl Molitor would have proven to the world he was the fastest badass on skis.

Molitor had the terrible misfortune of being born in 1920. He was entering his prime when World Cup racing all but shut down for World War II. Seems France, Italy, Germany, Poland, and Austria were tending to other commitments. Molitor would have been 19 at the 1940 Winter Olympics, scheduled for Sapporo, and 23 when the '44 Games came to Cortina d'Ampezzo, just 350 miles east of his hometown.

That'd be Wengen, Switzerland—famously, adamantly neutral Switzerland. With zero personal stake in the war,

Molitor became a casualty nonetheless. World Cup historians should revere Molitor as they do Sailer, Schranz, and the other Austrian legends. Instead he's a footnote.

It's not fair. After all, Molitor dealt with global Armageddon the best he could: by crushing the one scary downhill race still running.

The Lauberhorn, above Molitor's own Wengen, is notoriously wicked. The north face of the Eiger, the Mönch, and the Jungfrau form the backdrop for the longest DH on the FIS calendar. Its 2.8 miles require two and a half minutes to descend, plunging 3,300 feet o' vert at speeds surpassing the FIS maximum of 90 miles per hour. Two years ago, a section called the Haneggsschuss (a straightaway poised 30 seconds above the finish) witnessed the highest speed in the 90-year history of the World Cup: 100.6 mph, by Johan Clarey of France.

Begun in 1930, the Lauberhorn attracts a ridiculous

30,000 spectators each winter. They come for the blood, and they get it. One stretch hurtles skiers into a 90-degree turn onto a small bridge; another plunges into a tunnel. There's a 41-degree face. A known killer of racers, the Lauberhorn would never be approved today; its homicidal layout got grandfathered into the FIS.

Winners of the Lauberhorn DH can rightly call themselves the world's best. Molitor took first six times. His first and most outlandish victory came a few months before Hitler invaded Poland, when he was just 18. The youngster screamed through the Haneggsschuss, biffed hard right before the finish...and still spanked the competition by 10 seconds.

Wherever the FIS went, Molitor excelled, bracketing his nine-year career with podium appearances: a DH bronze at 1939's World Championships and two medals at St. Moritz in '48, when the Olympics *finally* came back. The ever-patient Swiss claimed silver in alpine combined and bronze in downhill.

Karl Molitor was damn good. Not that anyone remembers. Molitor died in 2014 at a robust 94. Before that, he spent years owning a Wengen ski shop, working as an FIS official, and launching the Karl Molitor ski-boot company. Before that, Molitor won those medals in his *loooooong*-awaited Olympic debut—after which he promptly retired. Ski racing's least-known legend had waited long enough.

Telluride-based **Rob Story** has never been an Olympian, but he's been writing this column for as long as it's been a column. At least he has that.

## ONE DAMN FINE WHISKEY DRINK



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- 1 oz rye whiskey
- 1 oz cognac
- 1 oz sweet vermouth (like Cocchi di Torino)
- ½ oz green Chartreuse
- ¼ oz Laphroaig scotch (or any Islay-style scotch)

*Mix all ingredients except scotch in a mixing glass with large ice cubes and stir 30 to 40 times until chilled. Strain into a double old-fashioned glass with fresh ice and add the scotch as a floater with a spoon. Garnish with an orange twist.*

Skiing's guest bartender, **James Lee**, is the owner and operator of Boulder, Colorado's Bitter Bar. He spends his weekdays skiing—and drinking—in Vail.





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## GIZMOS

## GOPRO HERO4 SESSION

GO AHEAD: CAPTURE YOURSELF SOME MORE.

As you've most likely heard by now, GoPro has a new camera, and it's really, really small. The GoPro Hero4 Session is the company's smallest and most durable action camera to date, and comes in a 35-millimeter by 35-millimeter cube that can fit pretty much anywhere.

Although for video quality it's not as good as GoPro's other \$400 camera, the Hero4 Silver edition, there are still some reasons why you'd pay for lesser quality. Did I mention how small it is? It's really, really tiny. It's half the weight of its predecessor and it's completely waterproof, so it no longer needs that annoying plastic housing. And the audio totally kicks ass. Also, remember how small it is?

One con of this little guy is that it's harder to manage settings without pairing the device with your cell phone or the GoPro Smart Remote. So if you're over 50, you might need to enlist your offspring when learning how to use it. But like we said, it's really small. **[\$400] —LESLIE HITTMEIER**



## GADGETS

## GARMIN RINO 650T

A WALKIE-TALKIE THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE.

The Garmin Rino 650t is the ultimate adventure gadget for skiers who get off on technology—and safety. The Rino 650t is the latest model of GPS-infused two-way radios, and it's more than just a walkie-talkie on steroids. It has a massive communication range of 20 miles and it comes loaded with detailed topo maps (unlike other Garmin products we've tested, for which maps cost extra). We were impressed with how fast the GPS acquired a signal, and the elevation data are on-point. The screen is pressure-sensitive, so you can work it with gloves on, and you can share positions and written messages with your radio buddy. It also transmits National Weather Service warnings and watches. It comes with software like BaseStation and BaseCamp, which let you view and organize maps, waypoints, and routes and lets computer users at home track your movements across the backcountry. **[\$550] —LH**



The lobby at The Lark.

## COOL DIGS

## COWTOWN HIPSTER MOTEL

BOZEMAN PUTS A NEW SPIN ON THE CLASSIC MOTEL. BRING YOUR SKINNY JEANS.

Bozeman, Montana, has always been a soulful skier's pilgrimage site. The hike-to ridge of nonprofit Bridger Bowl sits just 16 miles up the road, and Big Sky's honking 5,800 acres of serious terrain and nonexistent liftlines beckon from just an hour away. Add in a college-town vibe—hipster havens and distilleries meshed with the occasional bar where you can get your ass kicked—and you have *ski-vana*. But what has always been missing in this ski-bum niche was a decent place to stay.

Enter The Lark, which opened in April. The place was born when a group of local investors and architects bought the remains of the old Imperial Inn—an erstwhile landmark motel that had fallen into a *Breaking Bad* state of dilapidation. But instead of blowing up the place, the team kept the basic structure and refurbished it into a comfy industrial hangout. Walls and slanted walkways eliminate that car-headlights-in-your-window-at-1-a.m. effect. You can hang out by the outdoor fire pit while drinking craft brews from brown paper bags. Each room features Montana art, including life-size paintings of the biggest fish of each species caught in the state. Oh, and best of all, the Victory Taco truck pulls up in a semipermanent space in the parking lot, doling out street food and ice cream. **—DOUG SCHNITZSPAHN**





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# SAM MORRIS

ON TAKING PUNCHES, BOUNCING BACK, AND THRIVING.

*Interviewed by Sam Bass / Photo by Isaac Sterling*

**On a New England autumn night in 1999, Sam Morris, a lifelong skier and snowboarder, was out celebrating a friend's birthday just a week after his own 24th. The buddies accepted a ride from a driver Morris didn't know. The driver had been drinking, and his 1973 Chevy Nova spun off a hairpin turn on a gravel road, smashing sideways into a tree. Morris knew upon impact he was paralyzed from the waist down. What he didn't know was that skiing would help him rebuild his shattered life. Now 40, Morris founded a business in 2013 called Zen Warrior Training, a personal-development program based largely on insights he gleaned from the slopes. He lives in Los Angeles.**

**I started skiing when I was three at the Camden Snow Bowl in Maine.** One of my first memories was getting halfway on the chairlift and making it up about 12 feet. I was literally hanging by one hand and my chin and then I dropped.

**I started snowboarding in 1986, when I was 11.** There were literally three or four of us at Sugarloaf. People would look and say, "Oh my God, I've been hearing about these ski-board things!" I found more freedom in it at the time than I did in skiing.

**When I was around 21, shaped skis hit the market.** I demoed a pair and I was like, holy shit, and so I started skiing again as well. The last three years before my injury happened, I basically did 50/50, skiing and snowboarding.

**I never lost consciousness.** The guy fishtailed, overcompensated, fishtailed the other way, and we went into the woods. I was on the passenger side of the back seat and my body was flung over to the driver side and smashed against the tree. I knew in a split second that I was paralyzed because I couldn't feel anything below my navel.

**I was in and out of hospitals for several years,** plus many months lying down at home unable to move, just lying in bed trying to heal. It taught me a lot about patience and resilience. That was a difficult mirror for me.

**I wasn't able to start adaptive skiing until 2005.** Once I started, two things went through my mind. One: Oh my God, it's so good to be back on the snow. And two: Holy shit, this is not like regular skiing or snowboarding and I'm a beginner again.

**My sensation in my body starts at my navel.** I rely on cues from that point up to tell me where my edge is underneath me. Sit-skiers have to develop an intuitive sense of edge control. You feel your edge from your core up, as opposed to from your feet up.

**There are a lot of incredibly brave sit-skiers out there.** There's an added degree of anxiety because you're dependent out on the hill until you learn

how to get yourself up if you fall. You don't want to get stuck out there.

**Skiing has played a critical role in my recovery.** It allowed me a freedom that was totally inaccessible before. When I'm out on the snow I'm as capable as anyone around me.

**My parents' friends told them that Telluride had an awesome adaptive program, which is true.** It became an annual thing for my family. We would meet in Telluride and spend a couple weeks skiing together each year. I volunteered teaching for Telluride Adaptive Sports Program for a year in 2011-12 and skied 69 days that season.

**The first several years of adaptive skiing, I would go through pretty intense depressions when I came back home.** It felt like that freedom was taken away from me. I hadn't yet learned to be able to bridge the freedom I experienced on snow into the rest of my life. Not only have I made that bridge myself, but through Zen Warrior Training, I help other people.

**Zen is being awake to the present moment without judgment.** So rather than thinking about how things should be, you embrace things exactly as they are. Do that with the discipline and mindset of a warrior, day in and day out, and you build your life with that attitude.

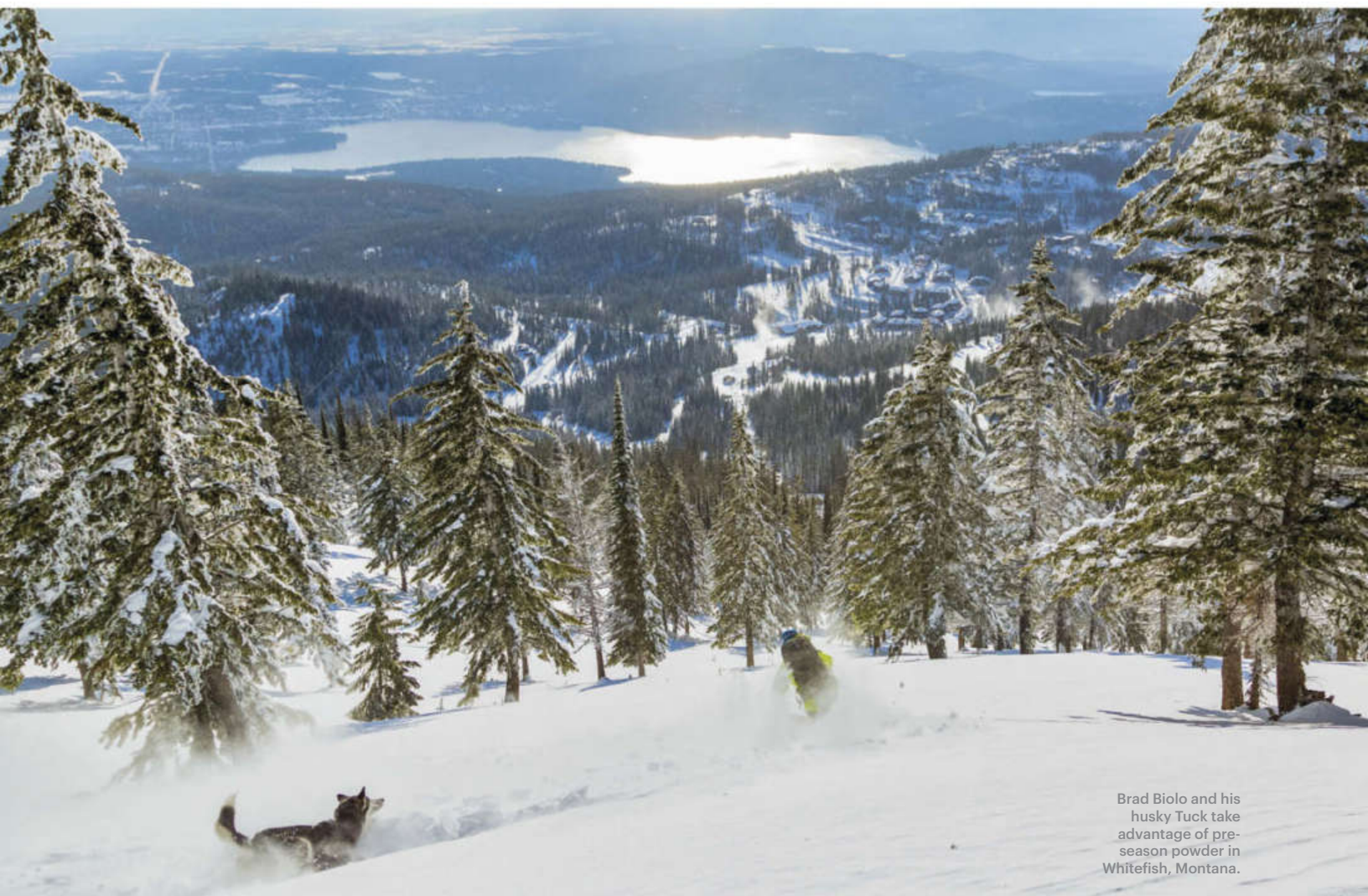
**Skiing has been a pathway for me into that Zen mindset.** When you're on the snow, you can't be in conflict with the reality of the terrain. If it shifts suddenly, your body has to shift with it. The same thing happens in people's lives. What people are expecting versus what's actually happening is constantly in and out of congruity.

**My wife, Meghan, believed in me when I wasn't able to fully believe in myself.** She has helped me commit to a lifestyle of perpetual growth and of continuing to embrace new challenges rather than saying, "Hey, I've already got enough challenges." I know I wouldn't be nearly as healthy as I am, nor doing this work, without her influence.









Brad Biolo and his husky Tuck take advantage of pre-season powder in Whitefish, Montana.

# TAKE FIDO

YOU THINK YOU'RE PSYCHED ABOUT THE POW? YOUR DOG IS OUT OF HIS MIND. HERE'S HOW TO GET HIM OUT SAFELY.

By Maren Horjus

**"OK!"** I bellow toward the ridgeline a few hundred feet above. There are six of us, and that's the signal that it's the second guy's turn. Before he takes off, he sits calmly, watching me—the most composed ski partner I've ever had. And then, at my command, he hurtles down the snowy curtain, ears tucked behind his head and pink tongue flapping, intoxicated by the fresh snow.

Raider earned his spot in the ski crew after a summer of successful backpacking trips measured in number of critters not chased and number of miles not leashed. When he proved that he could both "wait" and safely avoid ski edges, it seemed unfair to leave him locked at home when the rest of us were enjoying winter's bounty.

**Maren Horjus** (and her heeler Raider, as in the Oakland Raiders, don't judge) can often be found digging her 2WD Tacoma out of trailhead parking lots in Colorado's Front Range.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

JUST LIKE HUMANS, DOGS REQUIRE SOME TRAINING AND GEAR BEFORE HEADING INTO THE BACKCOUNTRY.

**COMMANDS:** "Wait," "Come," and "Go" are the three important ones. If your dog doesn't know these, then his natural instinct to herd you down the hill could result in a severed tendon. Ski edges and paws don't mix.

**CONDITIONS:** Your dog will get held up in deep powder and breakable crust. The ideal snow? Creamy and sun-softened. Bring

him on spring corn missions.

**TERRAIN:** Avoid avalanche terrain as you normally would, but take special heed of cornices and cliff bands. What might look like a fun feature to you could be a trap for your pup.

**CARGO:** If your dog is going to wear a pack, make sure it sits snugly between the nape of his

neck and just shy of his hips. He can carry up to a quarter of his own body weight.

**SNACKS:** Your dog needs his usual amount of food plus an additional 30 percent. A good choice is TurboPup Bars (see below).

**WATER:** He needs as much water as you do: about eight ounces every hour.



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Ski Legend: SCOT SCHMIDT

PHOTO: TONY DEMIN

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4



5

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## 2 / TurboPup BARS

Keep a box on hand and grab a couple before you head out. Fido will love that they're made with local, human-grade, grain-free ingredients, and he'll pull out his best tricks for the bacon and peanut-butter flavors. **[\$54 for 12 two-packs; turbopup.com]**

## 3 / Adventure Medical Kits ADVENTURE DOG SERIES MEDICAL KIT

This standard first-aid kit with dog-friendly additions should be a mainstay in your pack. It has medical solutions for the types of injuries dogs encounter most on the trail. **[\$25; adventuremedicalkits.com]**

## 4 / Ruffwear POWDER HOUND JACKET

You can't make this stuff up: a hybrid puffy for your pooch. Lightweight, synthetic, water-resistant insulation keeps your dog warm, while breathable, stretchy fabric gives him full range of motion. **[\$90; ruffwear.com]**

## 5 / Ruffwear POLAR TREX WINTER DOG BOOTS

There's a handful of booties that will protect your pup's paws, but we like the Polar Trex for its unmatched grip on ice and its shin coverage, which protects against ski edges. **[\$90 for a set of four; ruffwear.com]**





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# LAKE LOUISE

## WITH GARRETT CAPEL

/ By Ryan Dionne



When you're a little kid in Banff, Alberta, wanting to be Chris Rubens, Eric Hjørleifson, or your older brother, Keegan Capel, you're in the right place at the right time to grow up to be a ripper. Eighteen-year-old Garrett Capel has called Lake Louise his home mountain since he was three, and now he's a Rocky Mountain Freeriders coach just as Rubens and Hoji were. So we got the up-and-comer to dish on some of his favorite lines and zones at Louise.

**1.** Capel's go-to zone to start the day, **Big 7, Drop Out**, and **Vertical Cornice** give you a quick adrenaline hit. The big rock slab gradually gets bigger as you go skier's left, but it's possible to ride the rock, straightline sections between the rocks, or air it out. Once you get through the top it's pretty mellow, or you can find additional rocks to pop off. From the top of the Paradise chair, head skier's left to the zone.

**2.** With a recent storm and some wind, this ridge fills in nicely, Capel says. From the top of the Summit Platter, head straight down the ridge, dropping in between **Second Gate** and **Third Gate**. Before that ridge mellows, take a hard left and launch yourself off **Takeoff Rock** before continuing down to zone 3 or 4.

**3.** Strap on your wings and launch at **Hour Glass**, near where Ridge Run meets Saddleback. The smaller air is skier's left, while

the bigger is skier's right, and each has a good landing. But if you're not feeling it, you can straightline through the rocks, or go around and revel in what could have been. Plus you can combine this with Capel's No. 2.

**4.** Known by the locals as **Leapfrog**, this natural booter lets you go as big or small as you want. As you go skier's right, the natural lip gets smaller, so if you're looking to go big, follow the fall line down and hit the center of the lip. Just beware of people below you on Saddleback in case you don't stick your landing. And, as with zone 3, you can combine this with Capel's No. 2.

**5.** Despite its boring name, **H Gully** will get your heart rate up. After a short traverse from the top of the Summit Platter, drop into the last Gully you find (technically, the last is **I Gully**, but it's not always open—if it is, it's even better than H). It's tight, rock-lined skiing up top, but then keep heading skier's left into the bottom of I Gully before finding the traverse out.

**6.** From the top of the Summit platter, take **Boomerang** until you see a traverse or bootpack on skier's left across **Upper Boomerang**. Follow that track behind the next ridge, then drop into **Brown Shirt Main**. It's a narrow chute at the top, but it opens up into a big powder field. Or, if you don't like doing hop turns, head more skier's left from the end of the bootpack to drop into **UNC**.

### FYI

> Lake Louise is known for its wind-loading, so a two-inch day could feel like a 10-inch day in the back bowls.

> If the light is flat on a storm day, head to **Tower 12** and **Lookout Chutes** off the Larch Express chair. They don't fill in until midseason, but the mix of trees and cliffs makes it a fun powder zone.

> As you wait for patrol to drop ropes on the back bowls during a powder day, lap **Steep & Flat** and **Grizzly Bowl**. The lift that accesses the zone can get you to the bowls in a hurry.



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# SIDESTEP TO HEAVEN

SURE, TRAVERSES CAN BE TRICKY AND ANNOYING. BUT THEY PRESERVE POWDER AND TEACH MOUNTAIN SENSE TOO.

By Erme Catino

**P**umping my skis along Alta's High Traverse, I scoot by the entrance to West Rustler. The broader Central Wasatch peaks come into view as the morning light casts a glow on Mount Superior and the Emma ridgeline. Avalanche bombs echoing throughout the canyons are Pavlov's bells for skiers, provoking a not-so-dissimilar response.

Behind me, I know the chaos is mounting. The High-T, which is the narrow track from the top of the Collins lift to the steep pow-choked chutes of High Rustler and Eagle's Nest, provokes some of the most aggressive competition I've ever seen on skis. But the first few skiers on a powder day are rewarded with tranquillity. This feeling is difficult to describe—the sound of your fat skis schussing across the undisturbed traverse is hypnotic as you plan your run. For me, it's synonymous with a powder day at Alta, and no matter how many times I've experienced it, it still feels special.

Visiting skiers are usually overwhelmed by Western traverses—and the High-T at Alta is a perfect example. The High-T's open landscape and vulnerability to wind and whiteout can be humbling, especially when you have a giant pack of ski bums on your ass. Rush-hour pileups are inevitable. And so, then, there are complaints.

I, however, love the High-T. Traverses and sidesteps preserve powder. They allow a mountain to be skied without a lift up every damn sub-peak. You can also argue that they teach mountain sense. Undershoot the traverse and you'll miss the top entrance of your run, losing precious turns. They teach you how to find the fall line, a skill that is especially useful—and exceptionally evident when it's not acquired—in the backcountry. When used properly, traverses and sidesteps become a game of finding the smoothest route, be it through rocks or awkward-size moguls. They also provide great entertainment for parents, who can watch their groms air major sections, working their way from jump to jump.

But there are unwritten rules and etiquette, and to properly experience the flow and benefits of the traverse, the skier must abide by them. Showing up and acting like a greenhorn will get you heckled at best and injured at worst. Even the seasoned vet can get bucked. There have been times I've sped through Piss-Pass—the nickname for the end corner of the High-T—and a wind gust launched me towards Eagle's Nest. And there was the time a Joey and his family decided to stop around the same corner, and I had to throw the brakes on so hard, my buddy behind me nearly cut up my face with his ski edge. Stopping on the traverse is the biggest crime of all.

A longtime Alta patroller once told me there should be a guidebook so people can properly use the High-T. In reality it's basic common sense. Maintain your speed. Merge and exit as if

TK photo  
caption



**THE HIGH-T PROVOKES SOME OF THE MOST AGGRESSIVE COMPETITION I'VE EVER SEEN ON SKIS. BUT THE FIRST FEW SKIERS ON A POWDER DAY ARE REWARDED WITH TRANQUILLITY.**

it's a freeway. Don't stop! The sound of a pole tap means heads up behind you. Never take off your skis on a sidestep. Learn to use your edges and stay out of the back seat. Embrace it—it's the path to good skiing. Go fast.

Last and most important, don't bitch about it. Appreciate that the resort didn't add another lift, preserving the mountain experience—and the powder. ♦

**Erme Catino** is a freelance writer based in Salt Lake City. Originally from the East Coast, he's now a committed Alta powder junkie.





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# STUFF GUIDES CARRY

YOU SHOULD PROBABLY OFFER TO CARRY HER LUNCH.



## WITH CHRISTINA LUSTI

**Canadian badass Christina Lustenberger grew up ski racing but retired at age 24 to see what else the mountains had to offer. She switched her focus to backcountry skiing and is now an Arc'teryx athlete and ACMG assistant ski guide in British Columbia. This is the gear she trusts for long days of ski guiding in the hills.**

### 1 / SKIS VÖLKL BMT 109

"Weapon of choice for sure! Super light but it doesn't give up anything on the performance. It's not a wiggle-touring ski; it's a solid powder/ski-mountaineering ski."

### 2 / BINDINGS MARKER KINGPIN

"I love the way this binding skis. Talk about adding confidence to my kit! It skis like an alpine binding but walks like the best of the touring bindings. The bit of added weight is no big deal."

### 3 / BOOTS DYNAFIT TLT6

"Walking and climbing performance is something I look for in a boot. This boot is great because I can stiffen it up with the tongue when it's time to ski."

### 4 / POLES VÖLKL STICKS CARBON LIGHT POLE

"I take the straps off because I'm constantly probing with my pole, cutting hand shears to assess the conditions as I go."

### 5 / OUTERWEAR ARC'TERYX SENTINEL FULL BIB PANT + FISSION SL JACKET

"Outerwear is crucial because it keeps you warm and dry. Gore-Tex is a must."

### 6 / MIDLAYERS ALPHA COMP HOODY + CERUIUM SL JACKET

"I insulate with down or synthetic, depending on the conditions. The Comp Hoody is possibly the best track jacket for most B.C. winter days. The Cerium SL is always in my pack. So light and warm."

### 7 / HELMET MARKER CLARK

"It doesn't have pads or earmuffs, which lightens it up. I wear a toque under it. I have started taking my helmet in the backcountry because they've gotten so light, and it's important to protect my head."

### 8 / GLOVES ARC'TERYX VENTA

"I wear this lightweight windproof, breathable fleece glove while hiking and skinning."

### 9 / GLOVES RUSH

"Plenty warm, and still extremely packable."

### 10 / BEACON BARRYVOX PULSE

"This is such a great tool. It's user-friendly but also has a lot of advanced tools and functions."

### 11 / PACK ARC'TERYX KHAMSKI 31L

"It's smaller than the original Khamski—perfect for big

ski-mountaineering missions. One specific feature I look for in all packs is an easily accessible pocket designed to hold your shovel, probe, saw, and snow kit."

### 12 / PLASTIC SKI STRAPS (x4)

"One time my friend broke the toe piece of her Dynafit binding at the top of our objective. We strapped her boot back onto the ski with four straps and she was good to go. It saved the day!"

### 13 / GLACIER KIT

"My glacier kit changes depending on the time of year, terrain, and local knowledge of the area. Generally speaking, I need to be able to rope up in glacier-travel mode, build anchors in the snow and ice, secure someone, raise and lower, and rappel. It includes a harness, an aluminum ice screw, three locking and three nonlocking carabiners, a Petzl Micro Traxion, a sling, six-millimeter Prusik cord, an ice ax, and a 40-meter glacier rope."

### 14 / TARP

"It's always good to have an emergency shelter in the backcountry. It can also be used as an improvised toboggan."



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Tim Dyer finds the fresh in Boundary Bowl out the Gad 2 gate at Snowbird, Utah.

2016

# GEAR GUIDE

## **TESTERS**

Sam Bass

Scott Basso

Jeremy Benson

Georgie Bremner

Megan Brent

Mike Britt

Tim Dyer

Jenn Gibbons

Galena Gleason

Kelli Gleason

Brendan Gooding

Jill Johnson

Lynn Kennen

Gordy Megroz

Matt Schiller

Dan Withey

## **TECHS**

Nate Miller

Derek Thomson



**Welcome to our most inclusive Gear Guide to date, with more skis than ever before—because in the 70-some years we’ve been testing, this year’s test was the most competitive yet. Now, as you prepare to flip through page after page of shiny new sticks, most of you probably feel the prick of your salivary glands kicking in. A few of you, however, might anticipate a bit of paralysis from so much choice. Don’t fret. We have carefully crafted these pages to help you buy the best skis for you. The Testers’ Choice models are unequivocally awesome. Pick one, and get back to worrying about Donald Trump or how often you’ve microwaved food in Tupperware. Or keep reading and find the Official Selection skis; each has characteristics that may not appeal to everyone but might be ideal for you. We’ve organized the skis by terrain type. Happy shopping.**

► The **ALL-MOUNTAIN** category is full of one-ski quivers, designed to do it all. **ALL-MOUNTAIN WIDE** skis (pages 52 and 58) are built for those who ski mostly soft snow. **ALL-MOUNTAIN NARROW** skis (pages 62 and 68) are suited for skiers who spend more time on groomers or who want a nimble ride.

► The **POWDER** category (page 74 and 78) speaks for itself: sexy specialty skis designed to surf the deep. As with Groomer skis, the most versatile tend to be the highest-scoring (especially this year, when we suffered a lack of new snow to test in).

► The **GROOMER** category (pages 82 and 86) is for those who appreciate the bite of good old camber on hardpack—ex-racers, East Coasters, and Westerners with quivers to fill. These skis deliver precise carveability.

**Reviews by Kim Beekman, Gordy Megroz,  
Paddy O'Connell, and Leslie Hittmeier**

**Photos by Keri Bascetta**

# HOW WE TEST



Jeremy Benson hucked everything he could find under the Snowbird skies.



## WE RUN THE INDUSTRY'S BEST OBJECTIVE TEST.

The skis and boots we feature are not tied to advertising dollars.

Here's how it works. Manufacturers give us their hottest new gear, and we have our team of experienced testers subject them to the skiing equivalent of those sledgehammer machines they use to test the safety of cars. They throw them into trees, chuck them into chutes, huck them off cliffs, and hammer them in bumps.

The best rise to the top on a wave of unanimous love, earning the coveted Testers' Choice award. The other high scorers (we had a record number this year) earn Official Selection badges. The dogs get left out entirely. Sorry, dogs.

All the gear on these pages is good. We guarantee you'll find your flavor here.

## → WHICH BRANDS DO WE TEST?

We test both mainstream and small-batch companies. Our only requirement is that the gear be readily available to consumers.

→ **WHERE DO WE TEST?** We test big brands at Snowbird, Utah (page 52), and "indie" brands at Loveland, Colorado (page 90).

→ **WHO ARE THE TESTERS?** We recruit a group of men and women from all aspects of the industry, ex-racers, freeskiers, and retailers. They're all experts at detecting and articulating nuances of performance.

→ **A NOTE ABOUT PRICE** We list the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) for each model, but savvy shoppers will find them for less.

# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SKI-TEST SPONSORS

WITHOUT THESE FOLKS, WE'D BE NAKED, COLD, HUNGRY, THIRSTY, AND SUNBURNED. THANKS, GUYS.

## SNOWBIRD

(official test venue)  
snowbird.com

## HELLY HANSEN

(official apparel)  
hellyhansen.com

## Bern (helmets)

bernunlimited.com

## Beyond Coastal (sunscreens)

beyondcoastal.com

## Buff USA (buffs)

buffusa.com

## Cotopaxi (packs)

cotopaxi.com

## Flylow (gloves)

flylowgear.com

## Julbo (goggles)

julbo.com

## Nuun (drink tabs)

nuun.com

## SmartWool (baselayers and socks)

smartwool.com

## Stanley (water bottles)

shopstanley-pmi.com

## Swix (poles)

swixsportus.com

## ProBar (energy bars)

theprobar.com

## Swix (poles)

swixsport.com

## Untapped (maple-based energy)

untapped.cc

## Vermont Smoke and Cure

(tasty meat snacks)  
vtsmokeandcure.com



# Vökl

volkl.com



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## 3D.RIDGE TECHNOLOGY

Several new 2015-16 models are powered by 3D.RIDGE. A raised central ridge spans the length of the ski, reducing ski weight while maintaining the perfect pressure distribution and flex. Maneuverability and edge to edge transitions are enhanced, all the while maintaining Vökl's signature stability and edge grip.

100EIGHT



The new Vökl 100EIGHT boasts 3D.RIDGE, a new 141-108-124mm shape, and our multi-layer wood core. Combined with a Full Rocker profile and Smart Early Taper sidecut, it all adds up to powerful, lively all mountain freeriding from deep powder to groomers.



It's that simple.



# ALL-MOUNTAIN WIDE

IF YOU SKI MOSTLY SOFT SNOW, WELCOME TO YOUR ONE-SKI QUIVER. DESIGNED TO FLOAT THROUGH POW, FLOW THROUGH TREES, CRUSH CRUD, SUCK UP BUMPS, AND EVEN CARVE ON CORDUROY, THEY'RE OUR ALL-ROUNDER CHAMPIONS.



## NORDICA ENFORCER

**D:** 133/100/121 | **L:** 169, 177, 185, 193  
**R:** 18.5 (185)

**\$799**

Rarely is a ski such an overwhelming favorite among testers, but the Nordica absolutely crushed this category. It truly has no weaknesses, and it's able to slay turns with precision and dampness on groomers, playfully bounce through bumps, slide and shimmy through trees, and, thanks to a fat, 133-millimeter tip, even levitate in powder and crud. "A race ski you can bring into the backcountry," said one tester. "My soul mate," gushed another.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, VERSATILITY



## KÄSTLE FX95HP

**D:** 126/95/115 | **L:** 157, 165, 173, 181, 189 | **R:** 20 (181)

**\$999**

Austrian-bred Kästle has cooked up a nice combo of power and calmness with the FX95HP. Testers were surprised by the ski's versatility, reporting that it felt racy and fast on groomers, arcing turns of all size and with unshakeable hold. It was also cooperative and damp in the bumps. But even with early rise and a friendlier sidecut, it's still a Kästle. "Great for a skier looking for a more traditional shape," said one tester.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP



## ARMADA INVICTUS 95 TI

**D:** 133/95/123 | **L:** 167, 176, 185  
**R:** 20.5 (185)

**\$775**

That "Ti" stands for Titanal, an aluminum alloy found in most skis; in the case of the Invictus, it made the ski. "A nice step up from the version without metal," said one tester. "Nicely balanced with enough beef and bite." Testers found the ski railed arcs on groomers and never chattered, even at high speed. The Invictus also proved adept in the trees, shimmying through tight spots, and it displayed plenty of quickness in the bumps.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, VERSATILITY





## K2 SHREDITOR 102

**D:** 131/102/125 | **L:** 170, 177, 184, 191  
**R:** 20 (184)

**\$700** Surfy, smeary, supple, friendly, and forgiving, the Shreditor 102 impressed testers with its ability to hold a solid edge on hard snow and then turn into a total jib stick in trees, crud, and especially bumps, where testers loved its slarvey nature. Like lots of other K2s, the ski never feels as if it would get the best of you. "So easy to ski," said one tester. "Good for all skier types. Spin, air, and carve all with the flick of a boot."

**OVERALL: 4 / STRENGTHS:**  
FORGIVENESS, PLAYFULNESS



## ROSSIGNOL EXPERIENCE 100

**D:** 140/100/130 | **L:** 166, 170, 182, 190  
**R:** 20 (182)

**\$850** The beefiest offering in the Experience series is still one of our favorites. The wider chassis helped testers feel steady and balanced through crud and powder, and a luscious shape allowed for trenches on the groomers. "Lots of power yet easy to finesse," said one tester. And it's surprisingly nimble for a 100-millimeter ski. "You can dodge trees at speed and feel totally in control," said another tester. A Western machine that intermediates can ski and experts will love.

**OVERALL: 5 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP



## VÖLKL MANTRA

**D:** 132/100/118 | **L:** 170, 177, 184, 191  
**R:** 25.4 (184)

**\$875** We think Völkl's mantra should be "Keep building the Völkl Mantra." This ski has seen some revisions over the years, but this latest iteration is money. It's frisky in crud, bumps, and trees and very solid on hard groomers. "Any line I could find, this ski was willing to go there," said a tester. And it left all types of testers with goofy smiles on their faces. "It loves to be skied aggressively," said one, "but you can back off and it still turns well."

**OVERALL: 6 / STRENGTHS:**  
CRUD PERFORMANCE, EDGE GRIP



## BLIZZARD PEACEMAKER

**D:** 134/104/124 | **L:** 165, 172, 179, 186  
**R:** 21 (186)

**\$720** Peacemaker? More like Pisteslayer. Testers found that this ski, now in its second year, owns the groomers, ripping off tight turns like a race board. "I could roll my ankles and knees and it just settled perfectly into a nice arc," said one tester. In addition, the ski is a total crud buster, offering a damp ride over chopped-up corn and stomping landings off small drops. Concluded one tester: "Super-solid all-mountain ski for strong, playful skiers."

**OVERALL: 7 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, CRUD PERFORMANCE



## ATOMIC VANTAGE 100 CTI

**D:** 138/100/125 | **L:** 172, 180, 188  
**R:** 19 (188)

**\$850** The Vantage 100 CTI dominates the fall line, seemingly becoming more comfortable in steeper, gnarlier conditions. "This ski really likes to be pushed by an aggressive skier," said one tester. "It comes alive." On groomed, the ski has no speed limit, laying down long arcs with zero shake. And it rolls over crud and bumps as if they weren't there. Plus, with 100 millimeters underfoot and 138 in the tip, it's also a righteous powder performer.

**OVERALL: 8 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, OVERALL IMPRESSION

## HEAD MONSTER 98

**D:** 135/98/120 | **L:** 163, 170, 177, 184  
**R:** 21.3 (177)

**\$800** Head's proprietary use of graphene, the world's lightest and strongest industrial material, pays off in the Monster 98. "Nimble and responsive," said one tester, noting that the ski also felt strong and stable on groomed trails. "It's a GS slayer," added another tester. "Ripped huge powerful arcs." But testers also found the ski agile in the bumps and crud; it's made for those who like to crush groomers and occasionally wander off-piste.

**OVERALL: 9 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP

## K2 PINNACLE 105

**D:** 137/105/121 | **L:** 170, 177, 184, 191  
**R:** 19 (184)

**\$850** "Hot damn! They did it again!" exclaimed one tester. "These skis do everything you want and nothing you don't." In the bumps, the Pinnacle is maneuverable and fun. On groomers, it trenches. It also floats over crud and powder. And, as with most K2s, the word "forgiving" kept popping up. "There's so much tip rocker that you get right up in the front of these skis and crush it or just sit back for a Sunday drive."

**OVERALL: 10 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, FORGIVENESS

## VÖLKL 100EIGHT

**D:** 141/108/124 | **L:** 173, 181, 189  
**R:** 22 (181)

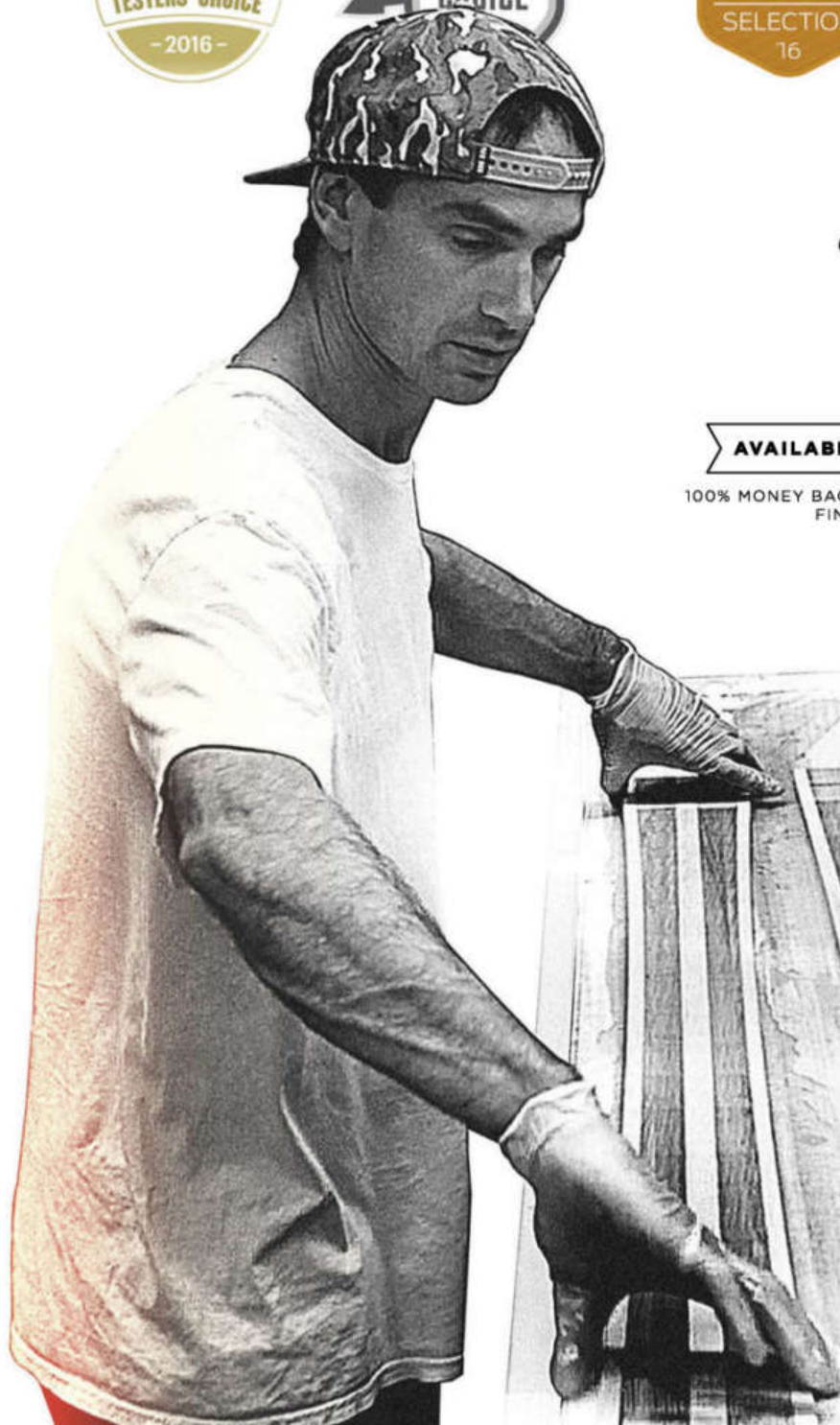
**\$825** The 100Eight stood out for one reason: It likes to go fast in open spaces. "You could rip high-speed turns down the fall line and feel in control," wrote one tester. That said, testers found the ski a bit unforgiving and recommended it for big, strong skiers and "a locale with lots of snow," in the words of one tester, who pointed out that the girth of the ski makes it ideal for powder and crud. "It wants deeper snow and room to work."

**OVERALL: 11 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, CRUD PERFORMANCE



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### LINE SICK DAY 102

D: 135/102/120 | L: 172, 179, 186 | R: 17.1 (179)

\$810

The new Sick Day 102 is quick, snappy, and full of life; one tester even said he would “buy this ski or donate an organ to get one.” It’s for anyone who likes a playful ski that holds its own in the backcountry and in the resort.



### ELAN SPECTRUM 105 CARBON

D: 142/105/120 | L: 173, 180, 187 | R: 16.5 (173)

\$850

The Spectrum is nimble, creamy-smooth, and smeary in pow but can still get knifey on hardpack. It’s a good everyday ski but a little squirrely at high speeds. “Tight-turn performance was exceptional, and the ski had a ton of life.”



### ROSSIGNOL SOUL 7

D: 136/106/126 | L: 164, 172, 180, 188 | R: 17 (180)

\$850

“So enjoyable off-piste.” The Soul 7 is a solid and fun pow ski that carves decently in groomed and chopped conditions. This ski is a lightweight all-mountain crusher but performs best on soft snow.



### DYNASTAR CHAM 2.0 97

D: 133/97/113 | L: 166, 172, 178, 184 | R: 15 (178)

\$700

This ski blows up crud, is stable at speed, and forgives on bumps. “It’s easy and predictable. No funny business.” The Cham 2.0 97 performs well off-piste and drives down the hill, making for an enjoyable ride.



### ATOMIC VANTAGE 95C

D: 134/95/121 | L: 162, 170, 178, 186 | R: 18.9 (186)

\$600

Atomic’s revamped Vantage series is lighter than ever. The 95C is super responsive and performs well on groomers without sacrificing any play in powder. “It’s quick and maneuverable off-piste and has unwavering stability on-piste.”

## MEN’S ALL-MOUNTAIN WIDE



### SCOTT SAGE BRUSH

D: 139/100/129 | L: 168, 178, 188 | R: 17 (178)

\$850

Scott’s new Sage Brush loves to carve. The wide platform and rockered tip give these skis pop and play and an “incredible edge bite.” This ski is quick from edge to edge and rewarded testers who skied aggressively.



### KÄSTLE BMX105HP

D: 134/105/123 | L: 173, 181, 189 | R: 21 (181)

\$1,149

“There is no speed limit for this ski.” The extremely powerful BMX105HP encourages mashing and loves long-radius turns. Built for experts, the HP version has two sheets of damping metal, but the new dual-rise tip and tail make it a shade more forgiving.



### KÄSTLE FX95

D: 126/95/115 | L: 165, 173, 181, 189 | R: 18 (173)

\$1,049

The FX95 gave our testers complete confidence on their edges. It carves powerful arcs while still proving maneuverable in trees and bumps. “Whoa! Killer ski. Has no limitations on its edge.” No metal; new progressive rocker for ease and versatility off-piste.



### ARMADA INVICTUS 95

D: 132/94/122 | L: 167, 176, 185 | R: 19.5 (176)

\$600

The Invictus 95 offers versatility in a forgiving package. The nose rocker makes it lively and playful. “It likes various turn shapes and is very cooperative and easy.” Testers were impressed by its ability to ski groomers and powder equally well.



### BLIZZARD BONAFIDE

D: 133/98/118 | L: 166, 173, 180, 187 | R: 21 (180)

\$840

“This ski seamlessly melted into the terrain.” The Bonafide is a burly, powerful, yet lightweight ski that excelled on groomed runs and powder. Built for expert rippers but accommodating enough for intermediates. Overall a great daily ski.



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# ♀ ALL-MOUNTAIN WIDE

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## BLIZZARD SAMBA

**D:** 131/98/116 | **L:** 152, 159, 166, 173  
**R:** 19 (166)

**\$780**

The Samba combines a classic square-sidewall, directional design with a lightweight core, giving this ski a strong and traditional yet graceful feel. The early-rise tip and tail love to sniff off-piste for adventure, and camber underfoot aches to rip into the groomers. A 98-millimeter waist is beefy enough to stand up to any terrain and to bigger, more powerful skiers, but it's also light enough not to be exhausting. "You can trust it. Anywhere," said a tester.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:** STABILITY, CRUD PERFORMANCE



## ATOMIC VANTAGE 95 C W

**D:** 130/95/115 | **L:** 154, 162, 170  
**R:** 16.8 (170)

**\$600**

This all-new ski from Atomic is so effortless to roll into perfect arcs that testers expected it to be noodly in the chop. But, said one, "this ski is anything but wimpy. It powers through every terrain. Every woman in the universe should have one." The successor to the Elysian, the Vantage 95 is the widest in the all-mountain series, and it incorporates Atomic's new Carbon Tank Mesh for lightweight strength. Rockered fore and aft, cambered underfoot.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:** PLAYFULNESS, FORGIVENESS



## VÖLKL AURA

**D:** 132/100/118 | **L:** 156, 163, 170  
**R:** 19.3 (163)

**\$875**

The Aura is interesting: two sheets of metal give it the backbone of a race-bred carver, and gradual full rocker gives it the attitude of a laid-back pow surfer. No wonder it earned top scores in both Edge Grip and Float. Last year the German manufacturer made this classic charger more approachable, but testers said it still has that glued-to-the-snow edge bite. "Zippy and powerful," said a tester. "Velvety transitions," said another.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:** FLOAT, EDGE GRIP





## ROSSI TEMPTATION 100

**D:** 140/100/130 | **L:** 166, 174  
**R:** 16 (166)

**\$850**

The only ski in the Temptation series with metal in it, and with good old grippy camber underfoot, the Temptation 100 was especially appreciated by our arc-loving ex-racers. As you'd expect, it has a traditional feel, and you can't ski it on cruise control while thinking about your grocery list. But chuck it into that tight chute and you can trust it with your life. "Great everyday ripper for someone charging the whole mountain."

**OVERALL: 4 / STRENGTHS:**  
**EDGE GRIP, VERSATILITY**



## NORDICA SANTA ANA

**D:** 133/100/121 | **L:** 153, 161, 169, 177  
**R:** 15.5 (169)

**\$799**

New to the Nordica collection, the Santa Ana is the sister of the Enforcer. It has a balsa-wood core, which is used to give it the damp strength of metal without the weight. Testers loved it for being a hard-charging yet playful ride, a nice mix of old- and new-school tech. It feels smeary and smooth in soft snow yet has the ability to rail turns on bulletproof. "A solid ski you can trust to haul ass on, yet was very maneuverable."

**OVERALL: 5 / STRENGTHS:**  
**PLAYFULNESS, FLOAT**



## ROSSIGNOL SAVORY 7

**D:** 136/106/126 | **L:** 162, 170, 178  
**R:** 17 (178)

**\$850**

Unlike the Temptation 100, No. 4 in this category, the Savory 7 is a ski you can use on autopilot. "So easy, I planned my dinner party and put on ChapStick while skiing soft bumps," a tester wrote. Many test cards described it as familiar and safe, predictable and reliable. Overall, it's a comfortable ski that would be great for a huge range of women. "You can smear an easygoing turn or turn it up to high performance," said another tester.

**OVERALL: 6 / STRENGTHS:**  
**FLOAT, VERSATILITY**



## HEAD GREAT JOY

**D:** 141/98/124 | **L:** 153, 158, 163, 168, 173 | **R:** 14.3 (168)

**\$750**

"It's like borrowing your dad's car: stable, reliable, surefooted." This ski hugs the ground and prefers long, fast arcs. It laughs at the afternoon chunder that throws lesser boards around. Featuring graphene, a post-Space Age material only one atom thick, the Great Joy manages to be both light and strong—the holy grail of ski construction. It's not particularly playful or nimble, but it loves to mach through all snow conditions. Best driven by experts.

**OVERALL: 7 / STRENGTHS:**  
**FLOAT, CRUD PERFORMANCE**

## WHY WE LOVE THE 'BIRD

Dick Bass's legacy is our all-time favorite ski-test venue. First, Snowbird comes pretty close to offering a powder guarantee. It's also cheap and easy to fly to, the terrain is varied and awesome, local rippers abound, and our team can be safely confined to the base village, reducing our chances of police involvement during our after-hours testing of, say, lunch-tray sleds down Chickadee or portable-speaker sound in a Cliff Lodge conference room. (A tester's work, it seems, is never done.) Snowbird, we love you. Thank you for making eight years of tests there so special.

**2.5** — longest run, in miles

**500** — annual inches of snowfall

**1** — porcupine named Larry that tirelessly begs for french fries outside the Steak Pit

**12,500** — cubic yards of concrete used to build the base lodge

**3.8** — millions of dollars' worth of silver found and processed in Snowbird's Gad Valley

**100** — estimated gallons of schnapps drunk by Swiss engineers while building the tram

**42** — minutes away from Salt Lake City International Airport

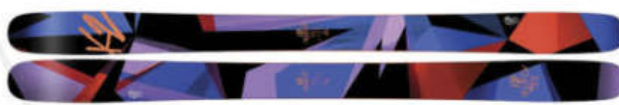


### ARMADA TSTW

D: 130/100/121 | L: 156, 165, 174 | R: 12.6 (165)

\$775

The TST's secret is camber. It's rockered in the tip for float and initiation (tip taper helps too), but the traditional body lends awesome pop and grip. Stable, steady, and versatile. "A maneuverable, sporty, energetic ride."



### K2 REMEDY 102

D: 131/102/125 | L: 156, 163, 170 | R: 16 (170)

\$700

A more smeary, surfy ski than the 98Ti, the Remedy 102 has new-school steeze that's playful and maneuverable and compensates for mistakes. "Easy to skid, butter, and slarve. More of a loose-feeling ski."



### ATOMIC CENTURY 102

D: 129/102/120 | L: 156, 164, 172 | R: 16 (164)

\$600

Big rocker in the tip and tail makes the Century pivoty and fun, but the tip can be overpowered by bigger, aggressive women. It's smearable, accessible, and eager to go anywhere. "Like a lab puppy. Playful and likes to tear shit up."



### STÖCKLI STORMRIDER 100 MOTION

D: 133/100/123 | L: 158, 166, 174 | R: 15.9 (166)

\$1,169

It's not forgiving. It's not playful. It's just goddamned fast. It does have tip rocker, not that you'd know it. It wants one thing and one thing only: to trench long GS carves at breakneck speeds. "This is a beast. It rails."



### ARMADA ARVW

D: 131/97/121 | L: 158, 168 | R: 18.5 (168)

\$700

It's a shade narrower than the TSTw and has a traditional untapered tip, so it makes sense that testers found it better suited for women who are just starting to venture off-piste. Rockered tip, cambered body. Easy to maneuver; doesn't crave speed.



### LINE PANDORA 95

D: 130/95/115 | L: 152, 162, 172 | R: 13.8 (162)

\$750

Nimble and spry, the new Pandora 95 is grab-and-go—no thinking required. Some testers thought it best for lower-level experts who want to keep things light. "Cruise some groomers, hit the park, duck into some bumps, scope out some tall Ts."



### K2 FULLUVIT 98TI

D: 131/98/119 | L: 163, 170, 177 | R: 17.5 (170)

\$850

K2's freeride all-mountain ski has channels milled out of the core to save weight and a strip of metal on the perimeter to add power and stability. Testers loved its energy. "A well-balanced ski that's easy to engage."



### FISCHER RANGER W98

D: 132/98/122 | L: 156, 164, 172 | R: 17 (172)

\$750

The new Ranger W98 is light, thanks to a carbon tip and lightweight wood core, but testers were conflicted about whether that's a good thing. Some felt it was nimble and forgiving, others too soft to stand up in crud. "Agile and pliable in the bumps."



# ALL-MOUNTAIN UNCHAINED



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# ALL-MOUNTAIN

## NARROW

A BIT MORE NIMBLE AND CARVY, THESE ALL-MOUNTAIN SKIS PREFER TO BE ON EDGE BUT ARE CAPABLE EVERYWHERE YOU WANT TO TAKE THEM. FOR THOSE WHO SPEND MORE TIME ON PISTE, THIS IS YOUR GO-TO VERSATILE EVERYDAY SKI.



### ARMADA INVICTUS 89 TI

**D:** 134/90/117 | **L:** 163, 171, 179, 187  
**R:** 18 (187)

**\$700**

"This ski was like, here, hold my beer. Watch this," said one tester, noting that the new Invictus was a show-stopping performer in all conditions and on all terrain. "It didn't even matter that the snow was crappy," noted another tester. "This ski still held and was snappy and playful." Testers liked that the Invictus had a huge sweet spot, a trait that might appeal to intermediates, but that it could also pop through bumps and rip GS turns like a race ski.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, PLAYFULNESS



### ATOMIC VANTAGE 90 CTI

**D:** 132/90/116 | **L:** 169, 176, 184  
**R:** 16.8 (176)

**\$725**

Attention, ex-racers with a penchant for crud and bumps: The Vantage 90 CTI might be your ski. "Incredibly smooth ski that felt silky when it was on edge," said one tester. "Quick and light in the trees and bumps, and it dives over crud like it's not even there." Credit a layer of metal and another of carbon mesh for the Vantage's ability to trench on groomers, too. "Loves to go deep in the arc and won't rattle you around," noted a tester.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:**  
CRUD PERFORMANCE, EDGE GRIP



### VÖLKL 90EIGHT

**D:** 133/98/116 | **L:** 163, 170, 177, 184  
**R:** 22.3 (184)

**\$775**

"The 90Eight packed quite a bit of punch," said one tester. That's because this wood-core ski has camber (a departure from lots of other Völkl offerings), which provides lots of pop out of the turn. "Snapped off short turns off-piste like a champ," said another tester. "And it carved on hardpack, too." In addition, the ski's massive, 133-millimeter tip lets it float through powder and rise above crud as well as many powder-specific skis do.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, CRUD PERFORMANCE





## VÖLKL KENDO

**D:** 127/90/110 | **L:** 163, 170, 177, 184  
**R:** 22.2 (184)

**\$825**

Clean. Glassy. Solid. Quick. Damp. Fun. Testers were full of one-word accolades for the Kendo. One tester also noted that the ski was “super easy to transition from large-radius turns to tight slalom turns.” And another said it was “rock solid on ice,” calling it an “East Coast slayer.” The ski also held up in bumps and through the trees, where it proved quick and “incredibly responsive,” in the words of one tester, who also noted that just about any skier would love these boards.

**OVERALL: 4 / STRENGTHS:**  
VERSATILITY, OVERALL IMPRESSION



## KÄSTLE FX85

**D:** 119/85/108 | **L:** 157, 165, 173, 181  
**R:** 19 (181)

**\$849**

Kästle makes a version of this ski with metal in it, but testers greatly preferred this model, which has a wood core and plenty of power. “Carved turns well and was surprisingly stable,” said one, who noted that the ski arced all different turn shapes. The FX85 also performed well off-piste, where one tester described it as “light, nimble, and playful” through the trees. Perfect ski for an aggressive East Coaster? Yeah, we think so.

**OVERALL: 5 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, PLAYFULNESS



## FISCHER MOTIVE 95 TI

**D:** 132/95/122 | **L:** 168, 174, 180, 186  
**R:** 19 (180)

**\$850**

The Motive is a lot like your pot dealer: mellow and laid-back but there for you when you need him. Testers didn’t seem to mind that the ski didn’t have a ton of life, and they appreciated the fact that it’s light and easy to maneuver. “Swing weight was great,” said one tester. “Especially in the bumps.” The ski also ripped off turns of all shapes with very little effort, causing one tester to call it a “perfect ski for intermediates to progress on.”

**OVERALL: 6 / STRENGTHS:**  
FORGIVENESS, STABILITY AT SPEED



## ROSSIGNOL EXPERIENCE 88

**D:** 135/88/124 | **L:** 156, 164, 172, 180, 188 | **R:** 16 (180)

**\$750**

Numbers don’t lie, and in most of our ranking criteria the Experience 88 did slightly better than its svelter brother, the 84. Each has a wood core, but the basalt fibers and added girth in the 88 provide more stability, and testers liked how it plowed through crud and arced on groomers. “Carve master,” said one tester. “Holds well in all conditions,” noted another. That said, if you’re looking for something quicker, please read our review of the 84 (see page 64).

**OVERALL: 7 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP



## K2 PINNACLE 95

**D:** 132/95/115 | **L:** 170, 177, 184, 191  
**R:** 17 (184)

**\$850** Like its big brothers, the Pinnacle 118 and 105, the 95 does pretty much everything well. "Slayed carves and floated in crud," said one tester. "So stable. A great weapon for funky snow," noted another. Testers dinged it for not having a ton of pop coming out of turns but liked the way it sucked up moguls and floated through powder, agreeing that it would be a good one-quiver ski for intermediates and experts alike.

**OVERALL: 8 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, FORGIVENESS

## DYNASTAR POWERTRACK 89

**D:** 126/89/110 | **L:** 165, 172, 179, 186  
**R:** 17.5 (179)

**\$750** So you live on the East Coast and like to make big, fast, swooping arcs on groomed trails. You need to thank Dynastar for building the Powertrack 89 for you. A layer of metal offers a ridiculously solid hold and had testers calling it things like "a true charger" that "likes to be skied aggressively." That's not to say it can't be taken off-piste. Testers lauded the Powertrack for its ability to plow through chop and crud like a boss.

**OVERALL: 9 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP

## ROSSIGNOL EXPERIENCE 84

**D:** 133/84/120 | **L:** 162, 170, 178, 186  
**R:** 16 (178)

**\$650** What it lacks in stability the 84 makes up for in quickness. "Slinky and sure," said one tester. "Came alive in the bumps." The narrower waist is part of the reason the 84 feels livelier edge to edge than the 88. The other reason is its core of paulownia—a very light wood—and nothing else, which makes this ski darty and playful. "Super maneuverable in the trees," said a tester. "The construction and shape of the Experience skis are extremely dialed."

**OVERALL: 10 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, FORGIVENESS

## SALOMON X-DRIVE 8.8 FS

**D:** 130/88/116 | **L:** 165, 172, 179, 184  
**R:** 18.3 (184)

**\$850** Testers reached some feel-good conclusion on the X-Drive. "Easy to ski." "Smooth, clean, precise carves." "It has a large sweet spot and is super predictable." Even so, not everybody will like this ski. In fact, testers saw the X-Drive as a ski built more for an intermediate—somebody not quite ready to put a ton of energy into a turn and not bitter when the ski doesn't give a lot back. "Middle-aged cruiser ski," as one tester put it.

**OVERALL: 11 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP



# Ready!



Skier: Owen Leeper Photo: Jeff Brockmeyer



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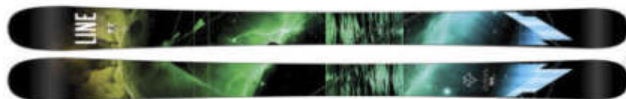


### ELAN AMPHIBIO 84 XTi 4D

D: 131/84/112 | L: 164, 170, 176, 182 | R: 18.5 (182)

\$800

Hard-snow grip and easy turn initiation due to a cambered inside edge and a rockered outside edge. It's so forgiving, testers felt carving was automated as a metronome. The Amphibio 84 XTi 4D destroyed the corduroy in every turn shape.



### LINE SUPERNATURAL 92 LITE

D: 127/92/115 | L: 165, 172, 179 | R: 19.6 (179)

\$560

Hard-charging freeride fun abounds with the Natty Lite. Two full-length maple stringers are surrounded by aspen to increase strength and durability. It's lightweight, playful, and poppy like a young Kelly Kapowski but as adept as A.C.'s Jheri-curl'd mullet.



### HEAD MONSTER 88

D: 133/88/114 | L: 163, 170, 177, 184 | R: 17.4 (177)

\$800

Built with graphene—pretty much Adamantium and Mithril put together—in its core, this is a balanced and reactive beast. Smooth, damp, and easy to turn. It's made for turning but it absorbs bumps and chop well. "Skis off-trail remarkably."



### DYNASTAR POWERTRACK 84

D: 123/84/106 | L: 162, 169, 176, 183 | R: 15 (176)

\$600

A precise and energetic carving ski that anybody can have fun on. Full-length vertical sidewalls give it supreme edge control, and you can lay it over well when eating up the steeps. Handles deep arcs like a pure race ski but it's easy to disengage too.



### SCOTT THE SKI

D: 131/92/121 | L: 155, 165, 175, 180, 185 | R: 21 (180)

\$825

"Gem of a ski!" Classic sandwich construction gives The Ski a torsional rigidity that allows it to go anywhere. Snappy and maneuverable, it's easy to roll on and off edge or change direction. "I felt the whole ski at all times."

## MEN'S ALL-MOUNTAIN NARROW



### BLIZZARD BRAHMA

D: 125/88/110 | L: 166, 173, 180, 187 | R: 19 (180)

\$780

"Not too beefy, but just right." Rocker-camber-rocker is an easy and versatile profile. The Brahma wants to live on the groomers and destroy them with locked-in fall-line carves. It does possess the ability to venture out, but it's at home when pointing 'em.



### ELAN SPECTRUM 85

D: 127/85/110 | L: 170, 176, 182 | R: 16.3 (176)

\$600

Elan's Amphibio profile—a rockered outside edge with a cambered inside edge—plus a convex tip and concave tail means serious turnin'. It's a straight-up sick carver, and it's light and quick enough to maneuver through trees and bumps.

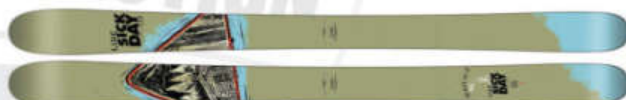


### HEAD MONSTER 83

D: 125/83/110 | L: 163, 170, 177, 184 | R: 18 (177)

\$800

An all-mountain charger, this monster wants to feed on steep lines. The ample sidecut combined with slight tip rocker allows it to initiate well and really come around. It's not as demanding as its big brother, the 88, but it'll crush just as hard.



### LINE SICK DAY 95

D: 130/95/115 | L: 172, 179, 186 | R: 18.2 (179)

\$750

"Just downright fun to ski." The 95 carves cleanly and predictably on any terrain thanks to great all-mountain geometry and easy-initiating early-rise tips. It's light, playful, and, much like your mother, does everything well.



### STÖCKLI STORMRIDER 88

D: 127/88/113 | L: 168, 177, 186 | R: 19 (177)

\$665

Not for the faint of heart, the 88 wants to be driven hard to scream down the fall line. It arcs well when skied aggressively at speed and will destroy crud and blast through bumps. So beat your chest and hold on, Hulk.



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# ♀ ALL-MOUNTAIN

## NARROW

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### VÖLKL KENJA

**D:** 127/90/110 | **L:** 149, 156, 163, 170  
**R:** 18.7 (170)

**\$825**

The Kenja has long been a favorite, but this year Völkl makes it even better. A newly tapered tip dives into turns effortlessly, and more rocker makes it more playful and forgiving than its predecessor. A slightly wider waist adds versatility and enlarges the sweet spot so it performs even when you're not on your game. Meanwhile, Völkl doesn't fix what's not broken: A wood core with a sheet of metal maintains its grip for that stick-to-the-snow feel. "This ski does it all."

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:** QUICKNESS, EDGE GRIP



### ATOMIC VANTAGE CTIW

**D:** 129/90/113 | **L:** 153, 161, 169  
**R:** 14.9 (161)

**\$725**

Less weight, more strength. That's what the R&D guys spend most of their time obsessing over, and the latest innovation from Atomic's war room is Carbon Tank Mesh. The CTIW has a layer of the stuff, along with a strip of metal laminate along its length, to make it über-stable. Testers agreed this ski is the ultimate crud crusher, with tenacious edge bite and a generous shovel that blasts through anything in its path. It's balanced and versatile with a "super-clean feel."

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:** CRUD PERFORMANCE, VERSATILITY



### BLIZZARD BLACK PEARL

**D:** 123/88/108 | **L:** 152, 159, 166, 173  
**R:** 17 (166)

**\$720**

A perennial Testers' Choice, the Black Pearl is a rare gem indeed: a hard-charger that's never punishing. It's quick and responsive, anticipating your moves before you make them. It rails on groomed and is eager to coax the tentative into an honest carve. It's smooth, calm, and balanced, with a rebound energy that instantly puts a smile on your face. "It's appropriate for so many skier types, in every type of terrain," said a tester.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:** STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP





## ROSSIGNOL SAFFRON 7

**D:** 128/98/118 | **L:** 162, 170, 178  
**R:** 17 (170)

**\$700**

"It seems like the whole ski is a sweet spot," lauded a tester. "It's ridiculously easy to recover from being too forward or back," said another. The Saffron 7 is a nimble, fun, easy everyday partner. It has light swing weight for pivota-bility and generous tip rocker (which some complained was too much for the category) for surfing over crud. It's not going to slice through ice, though, so it's best suited for softer Western snow. It's one of the more versatile options ability-wise.

**OVERALL: 4 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, PLAYFULNESS



## ROSSIGNOL TEMPTATION 88

**D:** 135/88/124 | **L:** 156, 164, 172  
**R:** 13 (164)

**\$750**

There's just something about the Temptation series. These skis feel buttery and calm, and they trench on groomed so easily, testers said the 88 felt like a "turning machine." You'll be grazing your hip on the ground, and at the end of the day your thighs will think you've just been walking the dog. Air Tip reduces swing weight (and makes pretty patterns when the sun shines through), and the wood core is responsive and solid. "Energetic carving and swooping GS turns."

**OVERALL: 5 / STRENGTHS:** STABILITY  
AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP



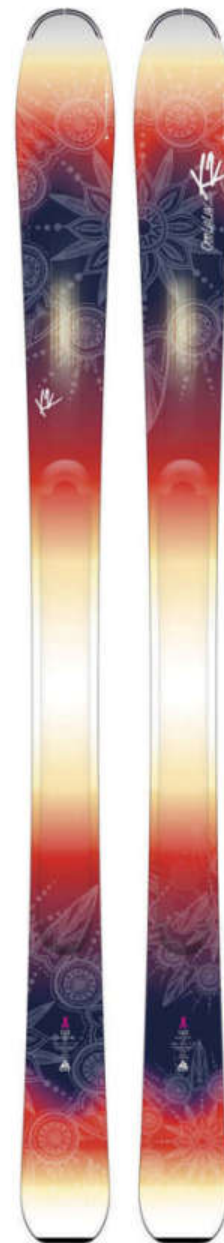
## DYNASTAR GLORY 89

**D:** 126/89/110 | **L:** 159, 166, 173  
**R:** 17 (173)

**\$700**

Dynastar's all-new Glory line is the women's version of its successful Powertrack series, and the 89 is one of the category's more piste-centric offerings. "Smooth, quiet, controlled," said a tester. "Dynamic and eager, yet polished," said another. It has a ton of energy, and a Cham-like pintail makes for easy transitions and maneuverability. It's an expert ski that expects good input, but it never makes unreasonable demands. Rock-er at tip and tail, camber underfoot.

**OVERALL: 6 / STRENGTHS:** EDGE GRIP,  
STABILITY AT SPEED



## K2 OOOLALUV 85 TI

**D:** 126/85/114 | **L:** 156, 163, 170  
**R:** 14 (163)

**\$850**

News flash: K2 thinks skiing is fun. And testers found it refreshing to ski something that doesn't take itself too seriously. The most playful and for-giving ski in the category by far, the new Ooolaluv is a party on your feet. It has a relatively soft flex despite a layer of metal in the construction, and it's quick and responsive. It's a great tool for intermediate skiers to grow on, and it can stand up to most experts' pressure. "You can get away with everything," said a tester.

**OVERALL: 7 / STRENGTHS:**  
PLAYFULNESS, FORGIVENESS

## SEMI-PRINTABLE INNUENDOS

Just what are these testers talking about? Maybe we're hopelessly immature, maybe we've hung out in too many locker rooms, or maybe we need to start making another kind of magazine, but every year our testers' gear descriptions make us snicker. Here are some of our favorites.

"Stiff and maneuverable."

"One great ride."

"Wants to go down fast."

"Too soft; wished it was stiffer."

"Rode hard and smooth."

"Floppy tip."

"Long, firm, and unforgiving."

"Pretty springy."

"Tons of mass in the tip."

"Very distracting bounce."

"Rock solid and ready to be driven."

"Just a great shape and feel."

"Had me screaming, 'Whahooo!'"

"Great performance in tight spots."

"It was hard to keep under me."

"For being so fat, it was pretty playful."



## STÖCKLI STORMRIDER MOTION

D: 128/85/110 | L: 159, 167, 175 | R: 15.2 (167)

\$999

Smooth, damp, stiff as hell, and fast enough to pin your ears back. Typical Stöckli. Testers said they could feel the Swiss heritage in the layup. "Great East Coast all-mountain option for a technically strong skier." "Built for speed and edge hold."



## SALOMON GEMMA

D: 131/85/112 | L: 157, 163, 169 | R: 14.4 (163)

\$650

The Gemma is "silky smooth edge to edge," and "very groomer-oriented but holds its own in a bump line." A consistent, easy-going short-turn specialist, the Gemma has a softer touch that caters to lighter women or those on the verge of expertdom.

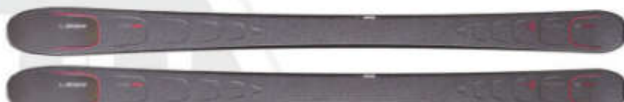


## FISCHER KOA 84

D: 126/84/112 | L: 150, 159, 167 | R: 14 (159)

\$650

Testers felt the Koa 84 is a user-friendly, bump-happy, confidence-boosting ski. Some thought it so forgiving, they'd buy it for their moms. Which also means it's easy to overski. "Big sweet spot."



## ELAN TWILIGHT 90

D: 129/90/114 | L: 155, 164, 173 | R: 14.3 (164)

\$600

"This knocked my socks off," said a tester. Bend the hell out of it and feel the snow rocket into your uphill boot. The Twilight 90 is a saucy, energetic, lightweight carver that's perfect for smaller skiers who like to be on edge.



## HEAD TOTAL JOY

D: 133/85/113 | L: 148, 153, 158, 163, 168 | R: 13.6 (163)

\$925

"Stable and well bred, it escorts you down with dignity and assurance," said a tester. This ski is light and strong, so it's good for various ability levels. A few complained about lack of rebound, but most appreciated its calm power.



## NORDICA WILD BELLE

D: 124/88/108 | L: 145, 153, 161, 169, 177 | R: 17.5 (169)

\$665

The new Wild Belle has a balsa-wood core, which is both lightweight and vibration dampening. Testers found it required muscle to engage the tip, but once they coaxed it into an arc, the rewards were huge. "Awesome hard-charger."



## SCOTT THE SKI

D: 127/89/117 | L: 155, 165, 175 | R: 19 (165)

\$825

How can you not love mad-scientist-haired Bobbie Burns, a.k.a. the Snow Goose, who brought us the 1970s original? Kudos to Scott for bringing it back. The Ski is light and unassuming, easy to maneuver, and as smooth as Bobby's moves back in the day.



## DYNASTAR GLORY 84

D: 133/98/118 | L: 169, 177, 185, 193 | R: 16.5 (177)

\$600

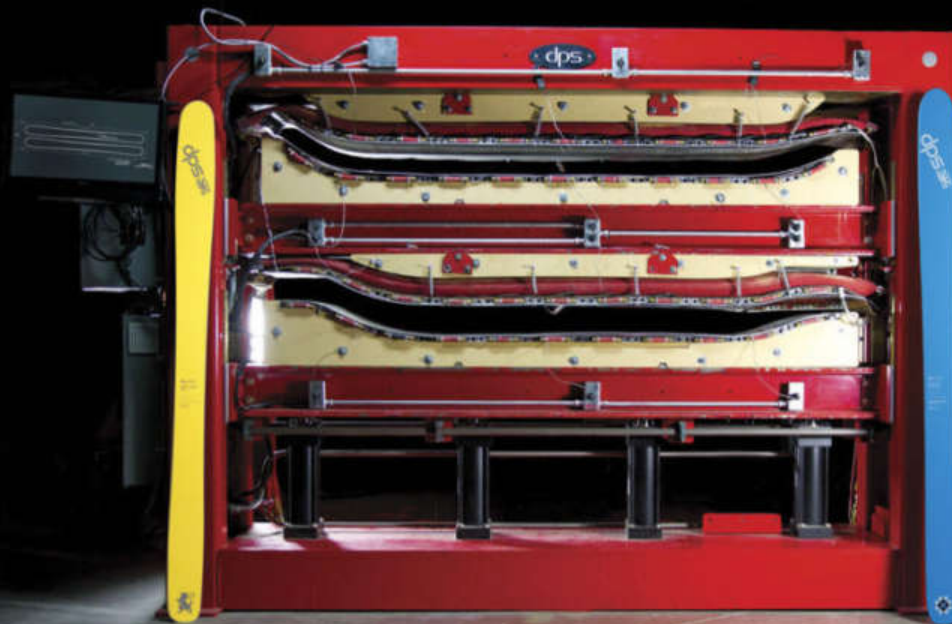
Our smaller testers thought this ski was a "firecracker," loving short-radius turns on-piste. It definitely prefers to be on edge, so it's not the most versatile off-piste. But smaller or less-aggressive women will love its pop and ease.





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GG 15-16 — SKIS



Tim Dyer scores first tracks in Boundary Bowl.



Megan Brent testing for speed on Chip's Run.

## HE SAID ⚡ SHE SAID

WHAT'S THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN'S SKIS? JASON LEVINTHAL, FOUNDER OF LINE SKIS AND NOW J SKIS, STIRS IT UP WITH THE K2 SKI ALLIANCE'S M.J. CARROLL AND ALYSSA CLARK.

### Hey, ladies, I'm going to be honest with you.

There is no such thing as a woman's ski. I've been designing and selling skis for 20 years and I can assure you that a ski cannot tell the difference. Skis aren't a pair of pants that need to conform to a different body shape—they're more like skateboards, yoga mats, or even motorcycles. Different-size people with different skill levels and performance goals need different sizes and constructions, unrelated to gender.

So why do ski companies tell you otherwise? Because after years of *Cosmo* ads touting products "made for a woman," you expect ski brands to do the same. And because ski companies are mostly made up of men, they obviously don't understand women—they just know they'd better give them what they want. So they took unisex skis, softened the flex, and removed the longer lengths, assuming all women are small and nonaggressive skiers. Men also assume women prefer to spend money on makeup and shoes, so they lowered prices. Most important, they changed the graphics to pretty colors with lots of swirls. The industry refers to it as "Shrink 'em and pink 'em." Genius! Brands sell more skis to women, women get what they expected, and everyone's happy. Right?

Over the years women have told me their skis are too soft, and they ask why no one makes them in longer sizes. Some have gone back to buying men's skis because theirs aren't high-performance enough. There's nothing wrong with making graphics for different people's tastes, men or women. I'm just telling you short or tall, fat or thin, beginner or expert, powder or groomers—these are the attributes and preferences a ski can be designed around, and being a dude or a chick has nothing to do with it. Now you know what I know.

**Sure, it would be easier to make one ski for men and women.** Same core, construction, graphics, flex, shape. Done. Great. Sell it. We could average out the price. Women would have less money for makeup and shoes, but you'd have more for beer.

But men and women are different. The anatomical shape, center of gravity, transfer of energy, and motion of female skiers are not the same as those of male skiers. Which is why K2's development processes for men's and women's skis are totally independent, from concept to creation. We don't turn our backs on the technology in men's skis, but we also don't just "shrink it and pink it." We develop the perfect product for women, designed by women.

It's true that far more men than women work in the ski industry. But when it comes to the K2 Ski Alliance development program and the testing of our women-specific gear, it's 100 percent women. Besides handling market research, demo feedback, and collective inspiration, the K2 Ski Alliance is responsible for rounds of prototype testing, graphic changes, durability tests, product naming, and group approvals before anything earns a logo.

Just as we understand the differences between male and female customers, we perceive and support the differences among female skiers. The Alliance creates products for the girl looking to get into the sport, all the way to the strongest big-mountain lady ripping lines as sick as the men.

The Alliance is proud to have had K2's support for a women-specific R&D program for the last 15 years. In fact, sales have grown to reach a 50/50 split between men's and women's skis, which means the women's skis are resonating with female skiers. So the chicks must be doing something right.



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GG 15-16 — SKIS



## K2 PINNACLE 118

**D:** 145/118/135 | **L:** 177, 184, 191  
**R:** 23 (184)

\$1,000

Statements like “What can’t this ski do?” and “Ripped trenches on groomed trails and ate up chop” had us reevaluating whether the Pinnacle 118 is truly a powder ski. Of course it floats through deep fluff the way ski this wide should, but it’s the all-mountain attributes that set it apart. The secret is its core: a combination of light aspen in the midsection and strips of rigid fir along its edges, allowing for both forgiveness and solid hold.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, EDGE GRIP



## ROSSIGNOL SUPER 7

**D:** 140/116/130 | **L:** 164, 172, 180, 188  
**R:** 20 (188)

\$850

The Super 7 continues to be the powder ski by which other powder skis are measured. It’s light and maneuverable. It’s a shock absorber over bumps and crud. And basically any skiers from newbies to experts will love it. “If you need a confidence builder, this is your ski,” said one tester. “Stable landing platform off jumps. Didn’t rattle you at all.” There was only one complaint: “Time for a graphic change from Rossignol,” one tester suggested.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:**  
VERSATILITY, OVERALL IMPRESSION



## SCOTT SCRAPPER

**D:** 147/122/138 | **L:** 180, 190  
**R:** 19 (180)

\$800

The aptly named Scrapper is a hefty ski that displays lots of fight in challenging terrain. It’s also a surfy powder ski. “In the softest snow, it performed flawlessly,” said one tester. But the best part? The ski’s stability. It’s supremely damp and never wavered during high-speed turns. And man, does it love high-speed turns. That said, it’s best suited to a bigger skier who likes to go fast and will work it hard to get the most out of it.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:** STABILITY  
AT SPEED, CRUD PERFORMANCE







## ATOMIC BENT CHETLER

**D:** 142/120/134 | **L:** 178, 185, 192  
**R:** 19 (185)

**\$900**

This ski's namesake, Chris Benchetler, spends the majority of his time hucking cliffs and sliding natural features.

You don't need to do that to like this ski, but you should enjoy smearing through glades and popping down bowls full of crud. What makes the ski so jibby are rolled-up plastic edges in the tip and tail that create more surface area when the ski is on edge in a turn. Said one tester, "It was like cheating. Very easy to butter and disengage."

**OVERALL: 4 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, OVERALL IMPRESSION



## LINE MORDECAI

**D:** 141/114/138 | **L:** 179, 186, 193  
**R:** 17 (186)

**\$960**

The Mordecai very much appealed to a specific type of skier. "Certainly caters to younger, jibby non-racers," noted one tester, who went on to explain that the ski is quick and light and easy to snap around in powdery trees or chopped-up bowls. But keep it off hard surfaces, where testers said the ski "struggled." "Stay centered and just roll your ankles side to side to initiate turns," said another tester. "An ideal backcountry pow kicker."

**OVERALL: 5 / STRENGTHS:**  
PLAYFULNESS, FLOAT



## BLIZZARD COCHISE

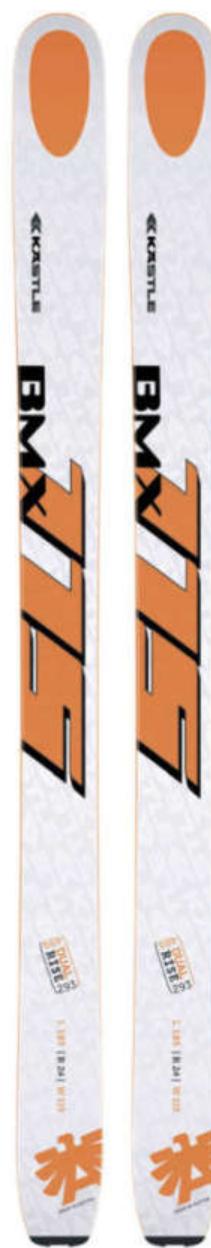
**D:** 136/108/122 | **L:** 171, 178, 185, 192  
**R:** 27 (185)

**\$900**

This year Blizzard lightened the Cochise with carbon and tightened the sidecut for easier, smoother turns.

But make no mistake: The Cochise is still one of the burlier skis out there. "Definitely not for beginners," noted one tester. "Wants to be skied aggressively," said another. Those who could tame this beast loved it, calling out its glassy, damp feel, its ability to shred through crud and powder, a great edge hold, and lots of snap.

**OVERALL: 6 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP



## KÄSTLE BMX 115

**D:** 141/115/130 | **L:** 177, 185, 193  
**R:** 24 (185)

**\$1,049**

Testers were excited about the entire line of Kästle skis this year because quads of steel are no longer required to turn them. That's because the addition of rocker and early rise allows easier turn initiation and the ability to smear. The BMX 115 still wants the touch of an expert skier, but it got high marks because it's powerful enough to blow through chop and agile enough to lace through trees in deep powder. "Very fast, smooth, and damp," said one tester.

**OVERALL: 7 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, CRUD PERFORMANCE

**KÄSTLE BMX 105****D:** 134/105/123 | **L:** 173, 181, 189 | **R:** 23 (189)**\$999**

A well-balanced, smooth, damp ski. The BMX 105 has progressive tip rocker without the chatter. Hollow Tech, a tip punch-out, reduces swing weight while increasing the tips' torsional rigidity. The full effect is rockered float without the loss of your molars.

**VÖLKL V-WERKS KATANA****D:** 143/112/132 | **L:** 177, 184, 191 | **R:** 23.8 (184)**\$1,375**

German precision meets the samurai heart in this nimble, lightweight, maneuverable, reliable ski. A carbon-rich construction and multilayer wood core in combination with a full-rocker design and early-taper sidecut makes it crave speed and steep fall lines.

**VÖLKL BMT122****D:** 143/122/136 | **L:** 176, 186 | **R:** 28.2 (186)**\$1,375**

Don't let the full-rocker profile or long-radius sidecut fool you. Just like Optimus Prime, it may be big but there's more than meets the eye. The BMT122 is nimble side to side, and surprisingly powerful for such a lightweight ski. It's supremely capable off-piste.

**ATOMIC AUTOMATIC 109****D:** 135/109/125 | **L:** 175, 182, 189 | **R:** 19.5 (189)**\$725**

A versatile waist width and a cambered platform make the 109 do a lot remarkably well. Tip and tail rocker are stabilized with metal inserts on the core, reducing chatter while allowing float. It also arcs cleanly on groomers, making it capable all over the hill.

**DYNASTAR CHAM 2.0 117****D:** 147/117/127 | **L:** 180, 190 | **R:** 22 (190)**\$850**

Redesign alert! More-moderate rocker improves tracking and decreases deflection, a new pintail enhances maneuverability and float, and a five-point sidecut offers easy turns and control at speed. The 2.0 leaps from turn to turn and eats up powder fields.

**SALOMON MTN LAB****D:** 141/115/129 | **L:** 176, 184 | **R:** 24 (184)**\$950**

Offering wide-platform performance in an ultralight package, the MTN Lab blends flotation, vibration absorption, and stability with edge grip. Very user-friendly, it adapts to all terrain. The honey-comb tip makes it quick, playful, and as creamy as Twinkie filling.

**STÖCKLI STORMRIDER 107****D:** 135/107/127 | **L:** 174, 183, 192 | **R:** 19.2 (183)**\$1,169**

It wants to run like Augustus Gloop toward Wonka's chocolate river: fast. Damp and stable, the Stormrider 107 is a powerful charger that's easy to maneuver and yearns to be on edge. Carbon inserts make it light but extremely strong with zero deflection.

**HEAD CYCLIC 115****D:** 148/113/131 | **L:** 171, 181, 191 | **R:** 19 (181)**\$800**

The hexagons aren't just a questionable graphic; they do something. The 115's elastic inlay and fiberglass exoskeleton reduce vibration and swing weight, and increase torsional strength. This turner and burner made testers say, "You give the best, Head!"

**SALOMON Q-105****D:** 133/104/125 | **L:** 167, 174, 181, 188 | **R:** 23.3 (181)**\$725**

A solid do-it-all ski with an all-mountain width and a slarvey feel. Lay it over with ease and lock in carves at speed, throw 'em sideways, billygoat, load and pop... If this ski were a book it'd be a Choose Your Own Adventure. Effective and fun on- and off-piste.

**BLIZZARD BODACIOUS****D:** 138/118/127 | **L:** 177, 185, 193 | **R:** 27 (185)**\$840**

A monster-truck version of the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile: powerful, fast, and beefy. It boasts unquestionable float and can wash or pivot at your bidding, but it will also instantly lock into an arc. Stout rocker-flat-rocker profile. Big drivers will love this adventure ski.





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# POWDER

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE THE SOUND OF YOUR SKIS HISsing THROUGH UNTRACKED POW. THE WIDE-BODIES IN THIS CATEGORY MAY BE EITHER TRADITIONAL CHARGERS OR SURFY PLAYERS, BUT THEY ALL HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON: THEY LOVE SKIING POWDER JUST AS MUCH AS YOU DO. PICK ONE FOR YOUR QUIVER, AND PRAY YOU GET TO USE IT OFTEN.

GG 15-16 — SKIS



## BLIZZARD SHEEVA

**D:** 134/104/124 | **L:** 158, 165, 172, 179  
**R:** 17 (172)

**\$720**

Leave it to this Austrian brand with a strong race heritage to develop a women's powder ski that still rips on groomed. It has the expected rocker fore and aft to surf through deep snow, but camber underfoot gives it unsurpassed snow contact when it comes to getting back to the lift. It's the most versatile ski in the category. (Which, in the hard-snow conditions we tested in, might account for its superhero score.) "You can read the snow through your feet," said a tester.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS: STABILITY AT SPEED, VERSATILITY**



## ATOMIC CENTURY 109

**D:** 133/109/123 | **L:** 159, 167, 175  
**R:** 17.5 (175)

**\$725**

The Century 109 is just plain well built. "Fun and zippy on the groomers and easy to maneuver off-piste," said a tester. "A huge variety of ladies would love it," said another. It lets you set the agenda—push it hard and the fangs come out, back it off and it politely defers—but it never lacks its own personality. It's solid, stable, and responsive. Rocker tip and tail for float, camber underfoot for grip, and a lightweight wood core reinforced with carbon for added stability.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS: CRUD PERFORMANCE, FORGIVENESS**



## ROSSIGNOL STAR 7

**D:** 140/116/130 | **L:** 162, 170, 178, 188  
**R:** 19 (178)

**\$850**

One tester said it best: "Dynamic, sophisticated, well bred." The Star 7 smoothly transitions from pow to groomed to chunder, with just enough edge to be exciting. The core in the rockered tip and tail has honeycomb cutouts, which decrease swing weight to make it pivoty and nimble. It's forgiving for the lesser skilled but will happily dive into tight trees and dicey couloirs. "You could lay it over and charge, or relax and have fun."

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS: FLOAT, FORGIVENESS**



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## VÖLKL 100EIGHT W

D: 141/108/124 | L: 157, 165, 173 | R: 16.7 (165)

\$825

Vökl's been sharpening its knives. Presenting a new lightweight pow slayer with a directional feel. New 3D Ridge technology shaves mass off the edges without sacrificing strength. "It's nimble and quick," "poppy and playful," "powerful and confident."



## VÖLKL ONE W

D: 138/116/130 | L: 156, 166, 176 | R: 19.7 (166)

\$775

The One is Vökl's pure pow diva, with full rocker, tapered nose and tail, and a generous waist. It pivots, smears, absorbs, and rips. Tight trees? Just look at the spaces; the One W will take care of the rest. "Nice even flex."

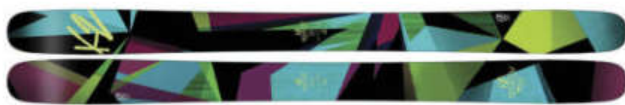


## K2 LUV BOAT

D: 139/108/127 | L: 163, 170, 177 | R: 18.5 (170)

\$850

K2's more directional pow ski, the Luv Boat got tester nods for being "a meaty ski with attitude." Channels milled out of its wood core save weight; a tapered tail exits the turn fluidly. Forgiving, solid, floaty.



## K2 REMEDY 112

D: 135/112/130 | L: 169, 179 | R: 18 (169)

\$800

The widest ski in K2's women's collection, the 112 is loose, playful, and springy, perfect for creative skiers who like to dabble in the park. It's stable and easy for the lesser skilled. "Spunky monkey."



## NORDICA LA NIÑA

D: 143/113/132 | L: 161, 169, 177, 185 | R: 14 (169)

\$849

La Niña takes its job of crushing pow seriously. And crud? Bring it. A feisty tip pulls you into the turn and won't let go until you're good and done. Can be a little controlling for some. "Great for hard-chargers on deep days."



## LINE PANDORA 110

D: 142/110/125 | L: 152, 162, 172, 179 | R: 14.2 (162)

\$810

Fun and forgiving, this ski "wants to play." A soft tip is easy to engage, making it a good confidence builder for those on the verge of shredding. It has a taste only for fresh, though—so [sigh] you'll just have to keep skiing pow.



## HEAD BIG JOY

D: 149/110/132 | L: 158, 168, 178 | R: 14.8 (168)

\$750

This ski is all sinew. Lightweight and insanely strong, it's a traditional charger that has no speed limit. Those who like to mach will appreciate its focus; it's not going to smell any flowers on the way down.



## ARMADA VJJ 2.0

D: 129/115/125 | L: 155, 165, 175 | R: 15 (165)

\$825

This ski still deserves a medal for its name alone, but it's also a damn fun ride. It prefers to butter around in soft stuff all day, so don't expect it to reward you when you feed it ice. In fluff? Friendly to all.



Athlete: Griffin Post  
Location: Alaska  
Photographer: Nic Alegre

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# GROOMED

TRUE, NOT MANY SKIERS SEEK OUT HARDPACK. BUT WHEN THAT PRESSURE STAYS HIGH, YOU NEED A RIPPER LIKE ONE OF THESE TO GET THE BLOOD MOVING. NARROW WAIST, PLENTY OF CAMBER, AND DAMPING METAL. WITH THE RIGHT SKIS ON YOUR FEET, YOU'LL FIND CARVING UP GROOMERS IS WICKED FUN.

GG 15-16 — SKIS



## ELAN AMPHIBIO 84 TI 4D

**D:** 131/84/112 | **L:** 164, 170, 176, 182  
**R:** 18.5 (182)

**\$700**

It's all in the Titanal. The Amphibio employs a layer of it, tip to tail, and that light, strong metal provides the ski with incredible hold and tons of life. "Super powerful coming in and out of turns," said one tester. "Impressive making both short and long turns on hard snow, ice, and even soft corn," said another. A smeary but solid tail also earned it high marks in the playfulness department, making it perfect for skiers who want to tackle some bumps, too.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:**  
PLAYFULNESS, FORGIVENESS



## ROSSIGNOL PURSUIT 800

**D:** 127/73/109 | **L:** 163, 170, 177, 184  
**R:** 15 (177)

**\$1,100 w/b**

Rossignol's Air Tip technology (a honeycomb of air pockets in the tip of the ski) worked so well in its freeride series that the company incorporated it into the carvy Pursuit 800. It works here too; the light tip initiates turns incredibly easily. "So simple to engage that intermediates will love this ski," said one tester. "But also powerful and a total blade through the ice, so ex-racers will love it." Bonus: soft enough to bend through bumps.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, VERSATILITY



## VÖLKL RTM 86

**D:** 132/86/114 | **L:** 167, 172, 177, 182  
**R:** 19.3 (182)

**\$1,350 w/b**

When testers write "Huge sweet spot," it's code for "anybody will have fun on this ski." That was the general feeling about the RTM 86, and the ski shone on the groomers. "Awesome hook-up," said one skier, describing the ski's ability to easily initiate turns and slice into an arc. "Super-solid edge hold," noted another. And though it prefers making medium- to long-radius turns on groomers, the RTM is also light and maneuverable enough to be smeared around trees.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:**  
STABILITY AT SPEED, EDGE GRIP





## DYNASTAR COURSE SPEED FLUID

**D:** 117/71/101 | **L:** 163, 169, 175, 181  
**R:** 17 (175)

**\$900 w/b** Ample sidecut and a layer of basalt fiber in the core (providing the strength and performance of metal at less cost) make the Speed Course Fluid light and springy and perfect for East Coast skiers who like to trench tight turns on groomers. "This ski dominated the morning ice," said one tester. "Incredibly responsive, but you really needed to harness its energy," said another. In short: You need skills to handle this ski.

**OVERALL: 4 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, EDGE GRIP

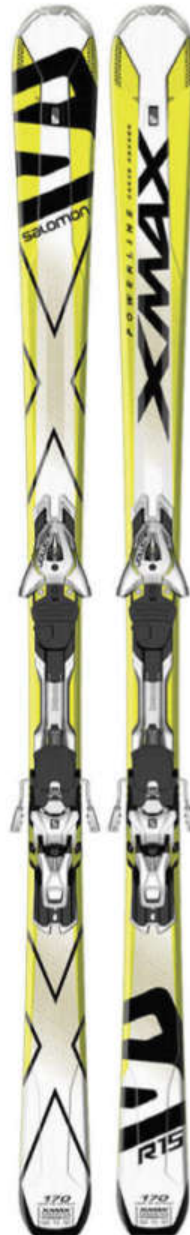


## SCOTT BLACK MAJIC

**D:** 122/78/112 | **L:** 157, 167, 177, 184  
**R:** 23 (177)

**\$900** Make big swoopy turns at high speed and then head into the trees for some quick, playful arcs on the Black Majic. "I could load this ski with energy and it straight slayed," said one tester. "Held well on crud and ice." "No wobble!" added others. Credit the design. The tip and tail each have their own turn radius, which enables the ski to engage easily, and the center is straight for stability. A wood core and two sheets of metal keep it stable and damp.

**OVERALL: 5 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, FORGIVENESS



## SALOMON X-MAX

**D:** 120/73/103 | **L:** 155, 160, 165, 170, 175 | **R:** 17 (175)

**\$950 w/b** Testers agreed: The X-Max is light and quick and turns easily with just the smallest amount of pressure. "Love that I could make it turn without stiff boots or having to build big angles," said one tester. "Super nimble," noted another. "Very controllable in the moguls." If testers had one beef it was that the ski had a speed limit, becoming chattery and unstable when they went too fast. The X-Max seems best suited to less aggressive skiers.

**OVERALL: 6 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, CRUD PERFORMANCE



## STÖCKLI LASER AX

**D:** 123/78/110 | **L:** 159, 167, 175, 183  
**R:** 17.5 (183)

**\$1,149** "Super-playful and fun ski that would be perfect for a skier trying to progress into carved turns," said one tester. "Stable and forgiving at speed," said another. That good-natured feel is thanks to a layer of viscoelastic material in the tail that allows the ski to release more easily out of the turn or slide when necessary. Already a proficient carver? The Laser AX's two layers of metal keep the ski damp and stable in high-speed arcs.

**OVERALL: 7 / STRENGTHS:**  
FLOAT, CRUD PERFORMANCE

## IN PRAISE OF ZE CAHHHVE

Powder is our drug of choice, but speed is the next best thing. And because the grooming machines lay down fresh cord every single night, we always know where to score it. Here are our favorite runs on which to get angulated. (Euro one-piece and headband optional.)

## WARM SPRINGS, SUN VALLEY

**CHIEF, OKEMO**  
**RIVA RIDGE, VAIL**  
**RUTHIE'S, ASPEN**  
**UPPER RAVINE, CANNON**  
**CLOUDSPIN, WHITEFACE**

## BIG BURN, ASPEN

**STEIN'S, DEER VALLEY**  
**UPPER COLLEGE TO LOWER**  
**COLLEGE, SUN VALLEY**  
**PERRY MERRILL, STOWE**  
**RIDGE RUN, HEAVENLY**



### BLIZZARD POWER X8

D: 125/81/108 | L: 160, 167, 174, 181 | R: 16 (174)

\$1,080 w/b

"Add some gel to your hair and break out the Vuarnets." The X8 is your ol' reliable, glued to the snow, damp, smooth as glass, polished—a solid stick that will benefit an aggressive skier. Rocker-camber-rocker makes it easy to lay over and bomber underfoot.



### STÖCKLI SCALE DELTA

D: 128/83/110 | L: 157, 167, 177, 187 | R: 17 (177)

\$1,069

A groomer-crusher with all-mountain application. Easily flexes into the arc and builds fall-line confidence. It likes to be driven by aggressive skiers in big arcs but is forgiving in speed checks. As with Euro cougars, ex-racers and beefcakes only for this ride.



### ATOMIC REDSTER DOUBLEDECK XT

D: 115/66/98 | L: 175, 182 | R: 15.5 (175)

\$1,200 w/b

Rocker at the very tip allows smooth, easy turn initiation. It's stable in long- and short-radius turns and solid at speed—a great beer-league ski. On the heavier side but incredibly damp and confident on edge. "Carves like a pit bull."



### KÄSTLE CPM82

D: 127/82/109 | L: 156, 164, 172, 180 | R: 16 (172)

\$1,499

Supremely light and pingy, the CPM is good in both short and long turns. Quick and maneuverable, it's made for the all-mountain frontside carver looking for an undemanding ride. Great for all skier types.



### HEAD i.SUPERSHAPE TITAN

D: 133/80/111 | L: 156, 163, 170, 177 | R: 14.3 (170)

\$1,075 w/b

Slight tip rise and 90-percent camber give you all the bite you want without the sting: speed with power steering. A pretty-skier's ski, it offers big rewards with medium effort. Predictable and, like Robert Downey Jr. in the '80s, it has no speed limit.



### FISCHER PROGRESSOR F19Ti

D: 122/75/104 | L: 163, 170, 177, 182 | R: 17 (170)

\$1,050 w/b

The new Progressor F19Ti has 25 percent less weight than last year, and slight rocker for easier turn initiation. It's stable in long turns and gets extra carve on smooth groomed. Not difficult but not loose or smeary either; a traditional carver.



### ELAN AMPHIBIO 14

D: 121/73/104 | L: 160, 166, 172, 178 | R: 15.7 (172)

\$1,050 w/b

Combining a rockered outside edge with a cambered inside edge sounds crazy, but it provides turn initiation with confident edge control. A fun and playful carver, the ski springs from turn to turn. A solid tail keeps you well balanced.



### K2 IKONIC 85Ti

D: 126/85/114 | L: 163, 170, 177, 184 | R: 17 (177)

\$850

The iKonic 85Ti is best for intermediates or experts looking for a leg saver. With its autopilot turn initiation, the 85Ti likes big, long turns on soft snow. Smears well. An easy, forgiving ski with a fun personality.





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# GROOMED

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GG 15-16 — SKIS



## VÖLKL YUMI

**D:** 125/83/103 | **L:** 147, 154, 161, 168  
**R:** 17.1 (161)

**\$650**

Very rarely does a ski rip so hard and still maintain a sense of humor. Strong in both grip and ease, it will pounce down the fall line like a tiger one minute and then purr around like a kitten the next. It has an extremely energetic, lightweight wood core, happily popping in and out of turns. A fully cambered midbody and tail give it great snow contact; a rockered tip keeps it approachable. "A ripping good time," said one tester.

**OVERALL: 1 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, EDGE GRIP



## SCOTT BLACK MAJIC W

**D:** 120/76/110 | **L:** 157, 167  
**R:** 18 (167)

**\$900**

Testers were psyched that Scott made it into the winners' circle with a strong and energetic carver. "Should have been called Black Velvet," said one tester about the Black Majic's smooth and manageable feel. "Superhappyfuntimes!" gushed another. Its tip and tail have their own turn radii for initiation ease, and the midbody is straight for stability. Sandwich construction with metal laminates give it plenty of beef.

**OVERALL: 2 / STRENGTHS:**  
QUICKNESS, PLAYFULNESS



## ROSSIGNOL TEMPTATION 84

**D:** 133/84/120 | **L:** 146, 154, 162, 170  
**R:** 12 (162)

**\$650**

The Temptation 84 was polarizing. "Smearing didn't faze this ski at all," said one tester. "Best on edges, carving only, very sharp," said another. We think that's probably because its smooth feel belies the torsional beast inside. It may eat crud for breakfast, but it always puts the napkin on its lap. No metal here, just wood-core responsiveness with carbon dampening. By all accounts, a capable trencher.

**OVERALL: 3 / STRENGTHS:** STABILITY  
AT SPEED, CRUD PERFORMANCE





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## HOW TO BUY SKIS

**STEP 1:** Enter the ski shop with a discerning look and furrowed brow beneath a trucker hat. We suggest flannel and weathered Carhartts for additional rad factor.

**STEP 2:** Walk directly to fat skis.

**STEP 3:** Pick up ski. Raise and lower. Swing back and forth.

**STEP 4:** Make audible "Hmmm" with face from Step 1.

**STEP 5:** Place tail of ski on ground, hold tip, push center of ski in and out several times while repeating Step 4.

**STEP 6:** Look down edges, turn ski several times, squint one eye, repeat Step 4, lean ski against

wall, step back, place ski on ground, step back, repeat Step 4, squat next to ski, repeat Step 4, pick ski up, look directly at the nearest sales associate, and upward-nod.

**STEP 7:** Discuss your skiing accomplishments with sales associate to ensure your rad factor has been established. Include where you've skied,

mountain towns you've lived in, the epic-est of epic adventures you've been on. Make sure to say "burly," "gripped," and "all-time."

**STEP 8:** Leave store without purchasing anything and get in touch with your sister's ex-boyfriend's cousin's boss who knows a guy who might be able to get you a pro deal.



### DYNASTAR ELITE 11

**D:** 121/72/105 | **L:** 148, 153, 158, 163, 168 | **R:** 14 (165)

\$800

Built with race-inspired power and precision for shorter turns, the Elite 11 is one quick stick. The edge hold is off the hook, yet testers were surprised by its versatility in bumps and at lower speeds. "Great on-piste slayer."



### ATOMIC CLOUD ELEVEN XT

**D:** 122/71/104 | **L:** 148, 155, 162, 169 | **R:** 13 (162)

\$850 w/b

This is an unapologetic carver with a tail that will spank you if you're not aggressively driving it forward. Crud, bumps, pow? It thumbs its nose. But for pure carving, it shines. Full sidewall, wood core, metal stabilizer. "Ready to run."



### BLIZZARD VIVA X8

**D:** 124/81/107 | **L:** 146, 153, 160, 167 | **R:** 13.5 (160)

\$960 w/b

Sandwich construction, full sidewall, wood core, metal laminates: This is a ski you can stand on. It's no surprise it carves, but it also proved to be versatile and forgiving, capable of helping you improve your form. "An excellent choice for an ex-GS racer."



### FISCHER KOA 80

**D:** 122/80/110 | **L:** 147, 154, 161, 168 | **R:** 15 (161)

\$750 w/b

More versatile, docile, and maneuverable for mere mortals than some of the other race-bred offerings in this group, the Koa provides a stable, predictable platform that will grow with you as you improve. "Great intermediate ski."



### HEAD SUPER JOY

**D:** 128/75/108 | **L:** 143, 148, 153, 158, 163, 168 | **R:** 12.5 (163)

\$925 w/b

Light as a feather, stiff as a board. The Super Joy surprised testers with its stability and grip, happily zipping down the fall line in turns of whatever shape. Easy on the quads. "Fun and friendly."



### ELAN ILLURE

**D:** 125/76/105 | **L:** 146, 152, 158, 166 | **R:** 14.4 (166)

\$850 w/b

Cambered on the inside edge, rockered on the out, the Illure is another brainchild of Elan's wonderfully mad scientists. The idea is to make it grippy and easy. Most felt it worked. "Stable at high speeds."



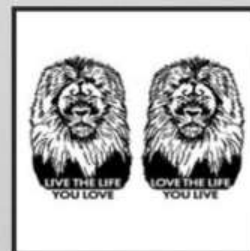


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**TESTERS**

Ashley Babcock

Sam Bass

Kim Beekman

Amanda Carlson

Tim Dyer

Doug Evans

Brendan Gooding

Colleen Goodrich

Ethan Gormican

Amy Hermes

Melissa Jones

Jake Koltun

Andy Leiter

Alex Lemley

Mark Lesh

Rob Lewis

Kevin Luby

Katie Lynch

Zac McColley

Eben Mond

Bradford Peterson

Katie Peterson

Derek Redd

Gretchen Swanson

**TECH**

Brian Eggleton

# INDIE SKIS

Often times, new technology that you see in mainstream skis originates here, in the small-batch skis that were pressed in some dude's garage or basement. The brands in these pages are nimble and passionate, liberated from a lot of the corporate bullshit bigger companies have to deal with. This past spring, we tested more than 100 of these skis at Loveland, Colorado, and found some incredible rides, inspired directly from the mountains where they're made. Read up, and buy local.

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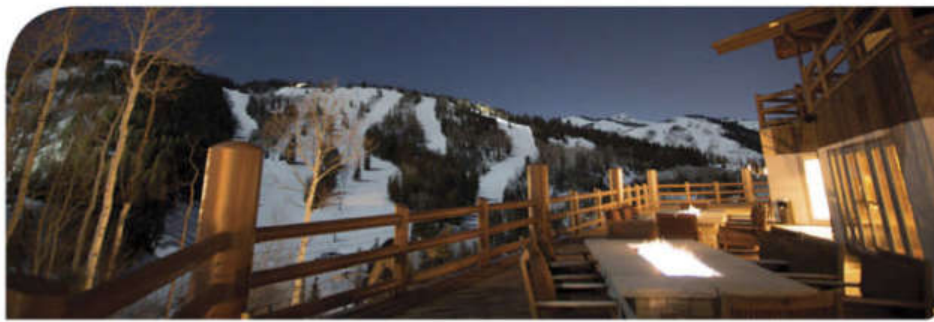
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# INDIE

THESE SMALL-BATCH SKIS HAVE BROKEN FREE FROM POPULAR CONCEPTIONS AND ARE UNFETTERED BY TRADITIONAL SHAPE AND DESIGN. WITH INGENUITY AND PASSION DRIVING PRODUCTION, THE RESULT IS TECHNICAL PROGRESSION AND A UNIQUE FEEL. THIS SELECTION IS THE PREMIUM BLEND, FROM ALL-MOUNTAIN VERSATILITY TO DEEP-POWDER PERFORMANCE.

GG 15-16 — SKIS



## MOMENT TAHOE

**D:** 123/96/112 | **L:** 168, 178, 186  
**R:** 23 (178)

**\$699**

The Tahoe delivers on Moment's promise to create skis for skiers, blending stability with freedom by using tip rocker, camber underfoot, and small sections of "microcamber" fore and aft of the binding. The combo results in maneuverability with healthy burliness. Like a muscular California spangled cat, the Tahoe is nimble, playful, and strong, but it won't shit in your house. "Stable enough to haul ass but adept enough to make quick changes in direction."

**STRENGTHS: STABILITY, PLAYFULNESS**



## DPS WAILER 99 HYBRID T2

**D:** 125/99/111 | **L:** 168, 176, 184, 192  
**R:** 18 (184)

**\$949**

You might have to take out a loan to purchase a pair of DPS skis, but they might be worth it. The Wailer 99 Hybrid T2 (rolls off the tongue, don't it?) wants to live in the soft depths, but it's no one-trick pony. "The go-anywhere tapered tip eats up terrain: bumps, trees, crud." This versatile ski offers effortless "old-school-Cadillac cruising." DPS fosters spiritual encounters and the Wailer family offers the most versatility, from on-resort turns to metaphysical journeys out back.

**STRENGTHS: FLOAT, VERSATILITY**



## WAGNER ROYALE WITH CHEESE

**D:** 138/101/121 | **L:** 183  
**R:** 20

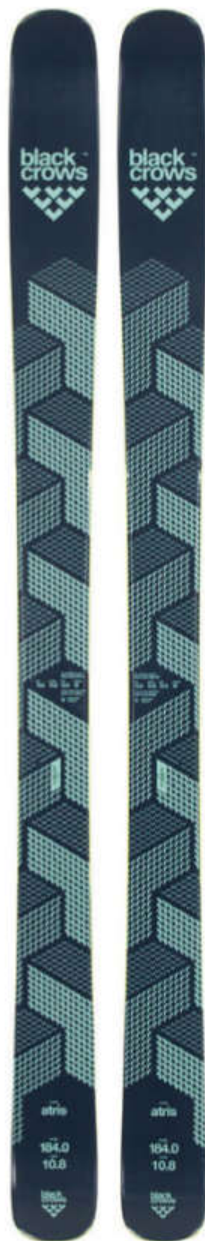
**\$1,750**

"I could happily ski this for the rest of my life," one tester said of the Royale. It's perhaps the best compliment a ski could ever get. Telluride-based Wagner creates one-of-a-kind skis that, like Samuel L. Jackson, will adapt to any role. Through consultation, Wagner deduces a skier's "DNA" to optimize an out-of-the-box-perfect match. Its tailored skis may not be on the dollar menu, but Wagner guarantees its work and your happiness, 100 percent.

**STRENGTHS: VERSATILITY, STABILITY**







## BLACK CROWS ATRIS

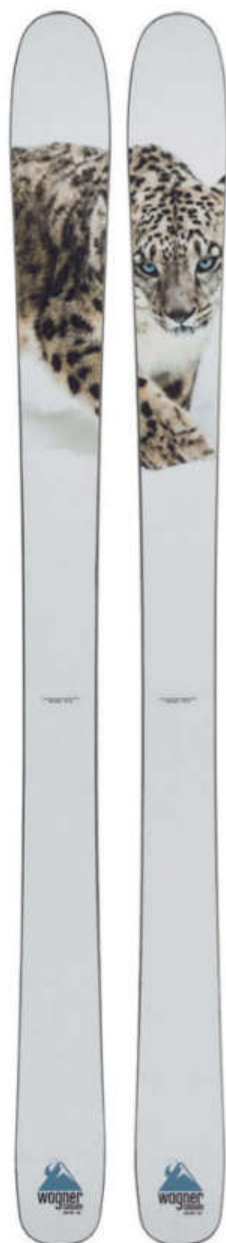
**D:** 138/108/128 | **L:** 178, 184, 189  
**R:** 18 (184)

**\$770**

The Crows want one thing out of their skis: complete sensory gratification. They've accomplished it with the Atris.

Testers wrote, "It's a rally car with edges," "It just seemed to be one with me," and "I strained my smile muscles." Refined tip and tail rocker gives the Atris a playful freestyle feel but not so much that stability or power is sacrificed. The ski can rail in high-speed fall-line turns or stylishly schmear. It's the go-to ski for playfulness and performance.

**STRENGTHS: VERSATILITY, QUICKNESS**



## WAGNER PANTHER 118

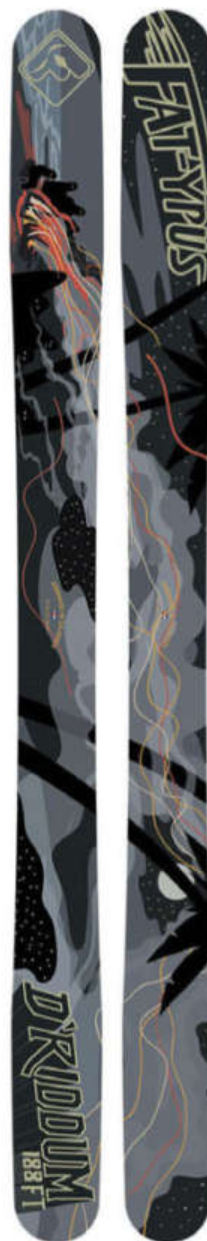
**D:** 153/118/139 | **L:** 184  
**R:** 20

**\$1,750**

Pete Wagner and crew pour heart and soul into their custom skis. The result: an unparalleled union of skier and ski.

The Panther 118 attacks quietly and aggressively, like a mountain puma in the night. Wagner powder boards are so smooth edge to edge you'll think you've clicked into a race ski when you're on the hardpack. Amazingly nimble for such a wide-body, it's ideal for smooth, floaty slashes in the deep stuff. "I will ski these skis all day, any day."

**STRENGTHS: MANEUVERABILITY, FLOAT**



## FAT-YPLUS D'RIDDUM FT

**D:** 143/118/138 | **L:** 188  
**R:** 15

**\$790**

Testers' consensus on the D'riddum is that it's a beast of an everyday ski—a solid ride that can handle everything from smooth powder to chop to crud. The contact points are drawn back toward the binding, allowing snappy, quick turns. But it can still arc beautiful fall-line GS turns. Rocker in the spoony tip and tail combined with camber underfoot will let you drive it hard and smear with style. "A ski with power steering. Makes any snow hero snow."

**STRENGTHS: INTEGRITY, VERSATILITY**



## DYNAFIT HOKKAIDO

**D:** 142/118/131 | **L:** 176, 182, 189, 195  
**R:** 28 (189)

**\$899**

Dynafit has created a gluten-free CrossFit Godzilla ski: agile, beefy, and large. It has everything you'd expect from a big powder plank but with the playfulness of a ski half its size. It's strong, reliable, and predictable. Its edge grip is superior, yet you can shut it down quickly in tight spots. The large geometry provides superior float, and the full carbon tip and stringers provide a damp, forgiving ride. "This ski meant business."

**STRENGTHS: STABILITY, PERFORMANCE**

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### LIBERTY VARIANT 87

D: 129/88/116 | L: 172, 179, 186 | R: 19 (186)

\$775

The new Variant 87 might be the versatile all-mountain ski you've been looking for. It has everything its big brother, the 97, has but with a more modest waist for groomer destruction. Metal laminates on a bamboo and poplar core lend a quiet, powerful ride.



### DPS CASSIAR 95 HYBRID T2

D: 129/95/116 | L: 168 (TOUR ONLY), 178, 185 | R: 21 (185)

\$949

"If I were a ski this is who I would want to be." DPS is not just for soft-snow surfing. The Cassiar 95 is quick edge to edge on hard-pack and capable of inscribing multiple turn shapes. Testers said it has everything you want in an everyday ski.



### LIBERTY VARIANT 97

D: 132/97/118 | L: 172, 179, 186 | R: 23 (186)

\$825

The Variant 97 charges hard and fast like a preteen with Mom's credit card. Liberty's very low-rise tip rocker plus camber through the majority of the ski create an ease of turn initiation with all the benefits of traditional grip, stability, and drive.



### ICELANTIC PIONEER

D: 131/96/118 | L: 166, 174, 182 | R: 19 (182)

\$599

Tip and tail rocker combined with camber underfoot and a new, softer construction (two layers of fiberglass instead of three) make the Pioneer lively, stout, and lightweight, like a ballerina with a dad bod. "I actually caught myself saying, 'Wheeeeeee.'"



### BLACK CROWS CAMOX

D: 127/97/114 | L: 174, 181, 186 | R: 18 (181)

\$700

The Camox offers a wide platform without the plankiness of a full-fat pow ski. It's a practical all-mountain ride with bidirectional playfulness—light, nimble, and able to rip turns in soft snow and crud. It will "make you feel like a superhero."



### FOLSOM TRIGGER II

D: 135/99/123 | L: 176, 180, 186, 189 | R: 21 (186)

\$800

At home in any locale, in any terrain, this one's a true all-mountain ski. "Glued to the snow, but it can break free and be playful upon suggestion." Take aim and let it fire. The Trigger II wants to find its target.

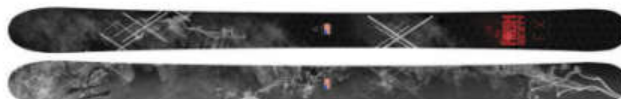


### ON3P WRENEGADE 102

D: 134/102/122 | L: 176, 181, 186 | R: 24 (186)

\$699

The Wrenegade is your directional daily driver with a twist. It can run straight and loose if that's your style, or hook up and carve when rolled on edge. A surprising and gratifying combination of stability and smeary playfulness. "This ski inspires you to play!"



### HIGH SOCIETY FX

D: 136/104/126 | L: 155, 165, 175, 185 | R: 24 (185)

\$799

"A GS race ski for weed smokers." Aspen's own HSFC delivers pure fat-carve love with the FX. It's a monster that lives for slaying big, open lines and arcing powerful long turns. If you're a well-balanced, athletic skier, you'll love the ripping performance.





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## SALOMON FREESKI TV

In the winter of 2015, Salomon athletes embarked on a mad-cap ski tour into the arctic circle, overcoming challenging weather, to capture a totally unique image of a Solar Eclipse. Check out Salomon Freeski.tv to see this amazing image, and the trip that produced it.





### MEIER BIG HOSS

D: 144/104/133 | L: 185, 191 | R: 17 (185)

\$895

Here's a ferocious beast that eats up terrain like spareribs on the Fourth of July. Fast and aggressive, it wants to run the fall line with power. No tenderfoots allowed on these stallions. You better be clicking in wearing your shit-kickers, Hoss.



### J SKIS THE METAL

D: 135/106/124 | L: 173, 180, 186 | R: 17 (180)

\$666

The Metal blends old-school power with new-school shimmy. Metal laminates reinforce the midbody but stop short of the tips. The result: a surprising combination of damp power and light-weight playfulness. "Stable as a brick wall yet super lively."



### FAT-YPUS M5

D: 131/106/126 | L: 177, 188 | R: 15 (188)

\$790

Fun, fast, and friendly, this all-mountain workhorse will be your solid crud-busting turner. The M5 hauls ass in any conditions but also permits slowed-down playfulness in the trees and bumps. It's wicked fast edge-to-edge and holds like a champ.



### DYNAFIT CHUGACH

D: 135/107/125 | L: 173, 181, 188, 194 | R: 22 (181)

\$799

"This ski is *badass!*" Indeed, the Chugach is a precise, powerful tool, but it also knows how to let its hair down and party. It's perfect for the big-mountain skier looking for out-of-bounds freeriding but wanting to rip on-piste too.



### FACTION CANDIDE 3.0

D: 136/108/131 | L: 176, 182, 186, 192 | R: 20 (182)

\$779

"I'll take two, please." The newly designed 3.0 lets you spread a layer of Land O' Lakes on everything you touch. It's as smooth as a stick of butter wrapped in silk. Great flex and pop with a sturdy hold, like Swayze in *Road House*.



### FOLSOM CUSTOM PRIMARY

D: 141/110/131 | L: 174, 182, 184, 188, 192 | R: 25 (188)

\$825

The Primary is a West Coast ski that does it all. It's seriously fast edge to edge. Mild tip taper facilitates drifted turn entries, but then you can lock it down for long-radius carves. It's a one-ski quiver that hugs the mountain and flows like water down the hill.



### J SKIS THE FRIEND

D: 136/114/125 | L: 173, 180, 186 | R: 20 (186)

\$690

Dr. J does it again. The Friend performs, period, whether the snow is in feast or famine mode. A big, light, soft, surfy ski for everyday conditions. A maple core, carbon stringers, extra-thick edges, and full sidewalls combine for energetic, stable playfulness.



### DPS WAILER 112RPC PURE3

D: 142/115/127 | L: 186, 192 | R: 25 (192)

\$1,299

The Wailer is a high-speed charger for big days out back. With a long sidecut radius and slight profile rocker, it wants to stripe 11s on the steep-and-deep. "I'm taking them home!" Have fun, ski fast...especially if asked to explain the name.



### LIBERTY ORIGIN

D: 145/116/136 | L: 174, 182, 190 | R: 24 (190)

\$825

"Give me Liberty or give me death!" The multiradius sidecut is designed for easy initiation and varied turn shapes. A stiff midsection paired with a soft, rockered tip and tail provides a solid yet easy-pivoting platform that makes anything your playground.



### MOMENT BIBBY PRO

D: 143/118/133 | L: 174, 184, 190 | R: 27 (190)

\$729

There's a reason Moment brought back the Bibby. It's awesome. Big, fast, and unapologetically tough, it's a substantial ski for fat slashes. If this ski encountered a vegan it would pour A.1. Steak Sauce on him and devour his soul. It's one aggressive son-of-a-B.





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# INDIE

LOW VOLUME YIELDS HIGH REWARDS FOR FEMALE SKIERS LOOKING FOR REFINED SHAPES AND UNPARALLELED JOYRIDES. THE NUMBER OF TRUE WOMEN-SPECIFIC SKIS IS ON THE RISE, AND THESE PROGRESSIVE-THINKING BRANDS ARE OUT IN FRONT WITH SKIS A WOMAN CAN RELY ON.

GG 15-16 — SKIS



## BLACK CROWS CAMOX BIRDIE

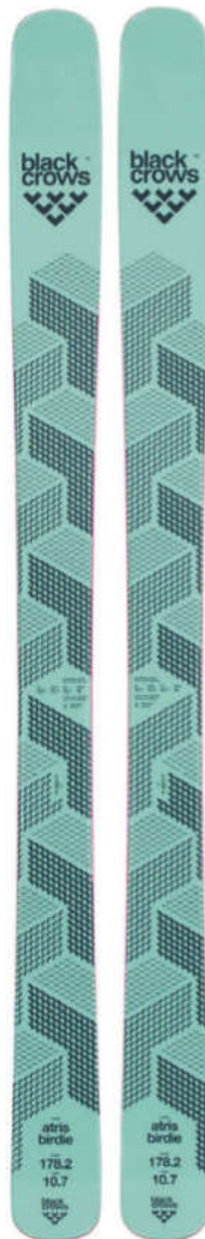
**D:** 125/97/112 | **L:** 165, 174  
**R:** 18 (174)

**\$700**

This French company set out to create products yielding unadulterated pleasure with unmatched performance.

The Camox Birdie is a confident ski that can charge yet remains easy to flick from side to side. It's a wide all-terrain ski, and it delivers. A full ABS perimeter lends hard-snow grip, and a new rockered tip floats in the depths. *Skiing's* very own Kim "The Mouth" Beekman found *le mot juste*: "Amazeballs!"

**STRENGTHS: VERSATILITY, QUICKNESS**



## BLACK CROWS ATRIS BIRDIE

**D:** 137/107/127 | **L:** 169, 178  
**R:** 18 (178)

**\$770**

Like a portly kid on Christmas, this is one quick fatty. Aimed for the gal who wants to leave the crowds behind, slay big, open faces of fluff, and stomp the deepness, it's a freestyle-oriented ski for out-of-bounds adventure. But its light weight and ample flex allow for on-piste destruction. Release the brakes and let 'em fly. The Atris Birdie will have you cawing with joy. "I'd marry this ski!"

**STRENGTHS: FLOAT, PLAYFULNESS**



## SEGO SKI CO U.P. PRO

**D:** 136/110/127 | **L:** 159, 165, 174, 179  
**R:** 21 (174)

**\$799**

Designed by Lynsey Dyer, the UP Pro will have you runnin' and smearn' quicker than mascara on prom night. It's burly, stable, quick, and carvey. It's a stout ski that's easy to drive. You'll want to take it on all the "pretty faces" of your dreams for stiff, nimble, big-mountain annihilation. Sego has delivered a Swiss Army knife of a powder ski: great in any situation, a blade for finesse, a hammer for crushing.

**STRENGTHS: STABILITY, VERSATILITY**





POWER UPHILL. CHARGE DOWNHILL.



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### RAMP CHICKADEE

D: 123/90/111 | L: 149, 159, 169, 179 | R: 17 (179)

\$949

Here's a wide-bodied carver that ventures confidently into variable terrain. Early rise and reverse sidecut at the tip together with camber underfoot and a powerful tail make it "easy and fun!" Unlike your dirtbag BF, the Chickadee listens to you.



### MOMENT SIERRA

D: 120/95/112 | L: 162, 172 | R: 18 (162)

\$699

This one's got curves. Twin "micro-cambers" within the center camber of the ski stiffen the overall profile yet allow the tip and tail to pop and float. The result is burliness but with quick, seamless energy transfer.

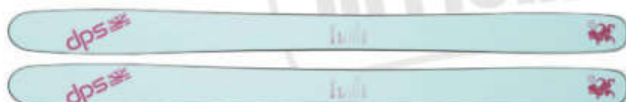


### WAGNER CUSTOM T&R 98

D: 135/98/119 | L: 172 | R: 17

\$1,750

The character of Telluride, Colorado—rugged, fun, energetic—pulses through every pair of custom skis from Wagner. Testers fell in love with the T&R 98's immediate feedback and its ability to carve like a GS ski one minute and bust crud the next.



### DPS NINA 99 PURE3

D: 125/99/111 | L: 158, 168, 176 | R: 19 (176)

\$1,299

Neither pinked nor shrunked, the Nina is built for rippers. Rocker and variable sidecut allow creativity and high performance on a versatile platform suitable for all conditions. This is an all-day, go-anywhere, dominate-everything ski.



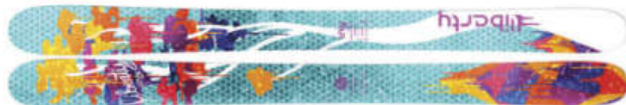
### RAMP BEAVER

D: 131/100/119 | L: 159, 169, 179 | R: 19 (169)

\$949

A trustworthy, confidence-building one-ski quiver, this Beaver will never go out of style. Bumps, trees, steeps, deeps—it handles anything with confidence and grace. "Felt like I'd been skiing on them forever."

## WOMEN'S INDIE



### LIBERTY ENVY

D: 135/105/122 | L: 156, 167 | R: 20 (167)

\$725

The Envy is stiff but maneuverable, unlike your father, poor guy. A catch-free, zero-dive tip hooks up and carves readily on the groomed yet floats and smears in powder. Eco-friendly bamboo keeps it lively and energetic. A beautiful, arcing powder ski.

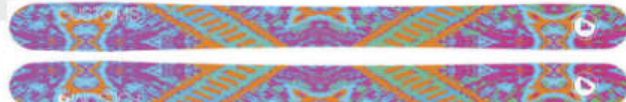


### DPS YVETTE 112RP2 PURE3

D: 141/112/128 | L: 158, 168, 178 | R: 18 (178)

\$1,299

The Yvette combines the surfy benefits of rocker with the carve-ability of aggressive sidecut and slight camber underfoot. It's a speed demon with crud-busting and powder-surfing skills as well. Strong and supple, it soaks up terrain quickly and quietly.



### FOLSOM CUSTOM GOLD DIGGER

D: 140/115/130 | L: 166, 169, 174 | R: 15.5 (169)

\$825

Feather-light but solid and lightning-quick, the Gold Digger is a powderhound that turns like an all-mountain ski. Take it out for big days and pan for pow, or trust it for snappy turns in tight, technical terrain.



### LIBERTY GENESIS

D: 145/116/136 | L: 158, 166, 174 | R: 17 (166)

\$775

A secure midsection and pronounced rocker make the Genesis a solid pow ski with confident edge control. "For a wide ski it carved like a veteran. Super versatile." The core has the weight of a dried apple and the pop of a T-Swift song—but it won't make you vomit.



### MEIER MADAM

D: 148/118/130 | L: 169 | R: 13

\$750

On the fully rockered Madam, you can crush powder all day and have energy to spare. It's burly and beefy but turns on a dime; it has the build of a hard-rocker with the soul of Sade: a smooooth operator. "It's so great for a company to make a burly women's ski."



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Mark Elling hard at  
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# BOOTS

**There's a reason the best skiers are so picky about their boots. Because without good ones, they wouldn't be great skiers. Worse, they'd spend precious time on snow worrying about pain and discomfort. Sound familiar? The right boot is an extension of your body, the command-and-control center of every downhill mission. So take your time. Choose wisely. And never, ever entrust them to airline baggage check.**

**Reviews written by Mark Elling and Steve Cohen. Photos by Kirk Devoll.**

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## ALPINA

Alpina has adapted its high-tech nordic liner technology for use in alpine boots. The highly vented and wicking 4Dry liner is integrated into every model of the men's Elite and women's Ruby ranges.



### ALPINA ELITE STEALTH

Veteran testers found this flagship luxury cruiser the best-fitting and best-skiing boot Alpina has ever produced. It fit a little snugger and shorter than expected in the lower. Uniquely, it offers an integrated, prewired foot-warming system in a thin Mylar wrap around the liner's toe box. The Alpina-specific battery pack (\$100) is not included.

**\$850** LAST: 102 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: YES

## APEX

Apex's unique system—exoskeletal chassis and snowboard-style inner boot—is updated this year, and testers took note. A tighter interface between soft boot and chassis better links skier and ski.



### APEX MC-3

Essentially a snowboard boot inside an open-chassis shell, this was the best-fitting and best-performing Apex we've ever tested. With the new forward lean adjuster, testers were able to achieve a comfortable, athletic stance that helped tap the boot's lateral power. Tolerances between the inner boot and chassis have been tightened.

**\$995** LAST: 101 MM / FLEX: 110,  
120, 130 / HIKE MODE: NO

## ATOMIC

The new Hawx Magna, with its wide-last, heat-moldable shell, was a universal hit with both male and female testers. And the men were impressed again with the Redster Pro 130, a frontside ripper, also moldable. In unofficial tests, they were intrigued by the new Backland tech touring boots and their ultralight, carbon-reinforced Grilamid shells (also moldable). They're crisp and powerful on the descent, with a massive range of motion.



### ATOMIC REDSTER PRO 130

The Redster is largely unchanged and has amassed another trove of accolades. Testers liked how it skied and fit. It quickly stores and releases energy from turn to turn and guides the ski with laser precision. It's narrow, but its quick-cook Memory Fit moldability opens it up to skilled skiers with thicker feet looking for high performance.

**\$850** LAST: 98 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### ATOMIC HAWX 130

Thick-footed rippers should put this on their short list. The Hawx is a decidedly roomy medium. That's awesome for just about everybody, and it's why this boot is so popular. It's easy to get on and take off. Its fit is well-tailored and fully customizable. And it's a capable performer, ready to pound whatever terrain and snow come your way.

**\$850** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### ATOMIC HAWX MAGNA 130

Lovers of the Hawx lineup were wary of this newcomer, but it won them over. For a wide-body, the Magna drove with ample precision. It's surprisingly well contoured through the ankle, heel, and instep despite the generous fit—good for skilled skiers with high-volume feet. Testers said it's torquey and strong, but they also liked its ease of use.

**\$725** LAST: 102 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### ATOMIC HAWX 100 W

Testers from both the high- and low-volume ends of the foot-shape spectrum agreed on this one. That's a rarity. Everybody felt ideally contained and skied with confidence. The fit improved substantially after undergoing the Memory Fit molding process. It's stronger than its marked 100 flex, with a cushy-warm interior and a handsome look.

**\$600** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 100  
HIKE MODE: NO

## BLACK DIAMOND

The freeride-oriented Factor and Shiva continued to impress testers with their skiing strength, touring ease, and moldable liner comfort. Quadrant, Prime, and Swift remain the touring specialists.



### BLACK DIAMOND SHIVA MX

The unique cuff-release design of the tour-ready Shiva MX provides a huge fore-aft hike-mode span. It comes with rockered, tech-compatible sole blocks for convertibility. The soles are through-bolted with metal-to-metal interfaces into the shell's internal boot board, which helped provide a "commanding feel" when skis were set on edge.

**\$770** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 110  
HIKE MODE: YES

## HOW TO BUY BOOTS: GET THEE TO A SHOP

Sure, you can read a bunch of reviews, then buy a ski online. But boots? You'd be tempting fate to try to buy without trying it on for size. That explains a recent trend: Smart shops are investing in bootfitting expertise in order to compete with internet. Look for a shop that takes pride in its bootfitting services. Many will guarantee fit, even if you have to bring your new boot in for repeated tweaks. They'll assess your foot for the best initial fit, guide you to the appropriate flex for your size and aggressiveness, then go to work to make sure your boot is optimized for comfort and performance.



## DALBELLO

With a huge boot line spanning both traditional overlap and three-piece constructions along with plenty of options for upgrading to Intuition-partnered I.D. full-thermo liners, the Dalbello stable offers something for virtually any skier. We also think Dalbello's continuously improving products, packaged with aggressive pricing, make the brand one to watch for real boot value. Look for models with tester-approved Contour4 shell-shape technology—pre-contoured for common fit issues.



### DALBELLO AVANTI 120 I.F.

"Forgiving," "friendly," "relaxed," testers said. The Avanti 120 IF skis pretty well too. It's got a "nailed-it" stance from which to roll off a variety of turn shapes with maximum confidence. It's not terribly quick—the cushy liner saps some sensitivity—and the fit is generous for a "medium," so thicker feet will be happiest.

**\$650** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 120  
HIKE MODE: NO



### DALBELLO BOSS

The Boss is one of our testers' all-time favorite three-piece boots. Testers thought it was smooth, powerful, and agile enough to be a daily driver for all but the most aggressive of big guys, especially when it's filled with a beefy foot. With its adjustable fit over the instep (the top of the foot) it fits a broad spectrum of foot shapes.

**\$550** LAST: 103 MM / FLEX: 100-110 / HIKE MODE: NO



### DALBELLO LUNA 80

A sleeper of a good deal, this capable three-piece construction sells for about \$300. Testers were surprised by the agility and strength its 80 flex delivered in all kinds of snow and turn shapes. It was happy skidding the greens, cruising the blues, or flat-out railing the blacks. It's also easy to get on and off.

**\$400** LAST: 103 MM / FLEX: 80  
HIKE MODE: YES



### DALEBOOT VFF PRO

With its Intuition liner, the VFF Pro, as customized for each tester, was one of the lightest and liveliest boots tested. The modified three-piece construction employs a classic cabrio lower boot. It relies on a spring-tensioned cable and rear buckle to restrain the cuff's forward travel and has a long, energetic flex pattern.

**\$795** LAST: 92-110 MM / FLEX: 100-120 / HIKE MODE: YES

## FIRST DEGREE

This modified alpine snowboard boot turned all-mountain ski boot returns with a revised liner and improved fit. Testers admired the unique and adaptable forward lean and flex-adjustment gear.



### FIRST DEGREE ST1

It skis much stiffer than its 110 rating and was tapped by testers as a better deal than the spendier and stiffer ST2 (130 flex). Both models have a new thermo-moldable spiral-wrap liner that helped make this First Degree's best year ever. The ST1 was adept at putting a ski on edge and holding it there in all conditions, testers said.

**\$600** LAST: 99 MM / FLEX: 110  
HIKE MODE: YES

## FISCHER

We tested Vacuum and non-Vacuum models, and the team liked them all, any which way they got served. The Vacuum models got skied straight out of the box as well as post-molding. The Fischer heat-molding process's 2Zone feature allows variable pressure control so that the final fit can be made tighter or looser in either the cuff or the lower shell. Testers said it worked as billed, especially when done right. Working with a skilled Vacuum technician and taking advantage of all the proper fit-prep protocols (pre-padding, toe caps, etc.) makes the difference between great and perfect.



### FISCHER RC4 130 VACUUM FULL FIT

The RC4's crispness and precision wowed testers, who used it to link rapid-fire arcs. A revised liner helped to boost its comfort scores, but it's still shorter, closer through the instep, and lower in cuff height than most boots in the category. The Vacuum molding procedure yielded significant fit enhancements.

**\$950** LAST: 98-103 MM / FLEX: 130 / HIKE MODE: NO



### FISCHER HYBRID 12+ THERMOSHAP

The value-priced Hybrid doesn't offer Fischer's Vacuum custom-moldability but still scored high in convenience, fit, versatility, and all-around performance. Its fit tension is right in the middle of the spectrum among wide-fit models tested. It's strong but smooth from turn to turn, and its tall stance is "spot on."

**\$650** LAST: 103 MM / FLEX: 120  
HIKE MODE: NO



### FISCHER ZEPHYR 11 VACUUM FULL FIT

Fischer's medium-width Vacuum models typically test well even without Vacuum molding. But the Zephyr's scores skyrocketed after molding. Testers said the process perfectly snugged up loose spots and relaxed tight ones. They also said it created a more consistent feel underfoot, which yielded better translation of movement to the ski.

**\$800** LAST: 95-105 MM / FLEX: 110 / HIKE MODE: NO

## FULL TILT

Testers still love the hard-charging, rapid-fire Seth Morrison Pro Model, but the smart fit and agile performance of the new wide-last Descendant (and women's Plush) stole the show.



### FULL TILT DESCENDANT 8

The Descendant, the new wide-last boot from the cabrio-only brand, sports a more anatomically tailored shape than previous Full Tilts. Testers liked the way the shell and Intuition spiral liner mate to wrap the foot with a firm, even grip. The Full Tilt DNA shines through in the long, soft flex feel. An upgrade to the stiffer No. 10 tongue costs \$50.

**\$750** LAST: 102 MM / FLEX: No. 8 / HIKE MODE: NO

## HEAD

The new Hammer 130 is the strongest-skiing three-piece boot we've ever tested (and the first such boot for Head). Luckily for most skiers it's available in a 110 flex. There are two park-oriented models as well, Thrasher 100 and 80. All of them, as well as the new Vector Evo models for men and women, are available with Head's new Form Fit shell-molding technology, which pairs with Head's Perfect Fit liner for a silky smooth and well-contoured wrap. But yeah, it's still the amazing Raptor line that dominates in the testers' minds.



### HEAD RAPTOR 140 RS

Thanks, Head, for not messing too much with this repeat winner. Slimmer buckles and a cool matte finish are enough newness. The Raptor remains a precision link between expert skiers and high-end skis, supplying limitless power, albeit favoring smooth surfaces, as damping and forgiveness aren't its forte. Pretty tight, but no hot spots.

**\$800** LAST: 96 MM / FLEX: 130-150 / HIKE MODE: NO



### HEAD VECTOR EVO 130

A comfort boot with a wild-child side. Ski all day in a cozy cocoon that slashes linked arcs in all kinds of snow. The Evo 130 fits like a generous medium with more room than category average at the forefoot. But it maintains enough rearfoot linkage to enable quick moves as needed. It features Head's new Form Fit heat-moldable shell.

**\$800** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 120-130 / HIKE MODE: NO



### HEAD RAPTOR 110 RS W

The racy Raptor rewards—no, demands—good technique and aggressive input. It performs at such a high level that testers forgave it for its lack of coddling. It fits shorter and narrower than most other narrow women's boots, with a slightly closer instep fit. Testers deemed that a fair trade for the uncanny quickness it provides.

**\$600** LAST: 96 MM / FLEX: 100-110 / HIKE MODE: NO

## K2

In only its third season in the boot-making business, K2 continues to expand and enhance its impressive line. The freeride-styled Pinnacle models (and Minarets for women) return with an improved Syncro Interlock hike-mode mechanism (made of stronger metal), and a tech-compatible rockered sole is available as an upgrade. The Spyne series (Spyre for women) comes in all widths and runs the gamut from 80-flex comfort/value models to 130-flex powerhouses, all powered by the lively, no-rivets Energy Interlock cuff connection.



### K2 SPYNE 130 HV

Testers said this HV (high-volume) Spyne feels noticeably wider than the medium-fit K2s, but they still judged it to be one of the narrowest of the wide-fit boots. It's a big-guy boot, more than big-foot boot. Good skiers who usually buy narrow or medium boots but don't want any bootfitting hassles should give it a look.

**\$800** LAST: 102 MM / FLEX: 130 HIKE MODE: NO



### K2 PINNACLE 130 LV

K2's stance angles continue to impress, and the Pinnacle's shin fit and flex feel were tops with testers too. Walk-mode range of motion is as good as it gets, and in ski mode it holds its own against fixed-cuff competitors. It fits in an appropriately firm 97-mm way—tight. But give it time; the Intuition liner molds to the foot with or without heat.

**\$850** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 130 HIKE MODE: YES



### K2 SPYRE 110

Like all the K2s, this was an unabashed performer. It lacks frills and fur, opting instead for the ability to confidently range all over the mountain. Quick lateral transitions and a snappy flex feel helped testers get through rugged terrain at high speeds. It's initially tight in the toe, but the Intuition liner quickly mellows for a snug-medium fit.

**\$750** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 110 HIKE MODE: NO

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## LANGE

In nearly 40 adult models, you won't find a park boot, a bucket boot, or a backcountry boot. Lange knows what it does well and continues to excel at the four-buckle overlap game, offering three widths and two cuff-height options in both fixed-cuff and hike-mode designs. A full overhaul on the hike-mode XT boots elevates their already exemplary fit and performance. Small liner changes were enough to update the narrow- and medium-fit RX and wide-fit SX lines. Anatomic fit, sensible stance angles, bootfitter-friendly construction, and top-tier performance continue to define the test's most successful brand.



### LANGE RS 140

Testers gave the RS some of their highest marks in the Power, Stability, Quickness, and Balance criteria. Its performance is smooth and sensitive yet blindingly powerful, and the feel of its cockpit is firm but decidedly comfortable. The up-front fit is relaxed, especially compared to the shrink-wrapped feel everywhere else.

**\$900** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 140  
HIKE MODE: NO



### LANGE RX 130 LV

This narrow-class leader's home-base stance angles put good skiers exactly where they want to be and are the key to its terrain and turn-shape versatility. The RX blends race power with a big-mountain-stomping suspension. New perforated foam in the liner erases a perennial tight spot over the midfoot.

**\$850** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### LANGE XT 2.0 130

The reshaped lower shell of the new XT is roomier in the midfoot and instep, and the link between cuff and lower has been refined. There's a long, juicy flex feel that starts from a tall, upright position and progressively loads energy to the ski. Walk to Ride rockered soles improve mobility, but it's more excited about skiing than touring.

**\$850** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: YES



### LANGE XT 2.0 110 W LV

It's game for off-piste assaults—the updated hike mode has more range of motion, and rockered Walk to Ride (WTR) soles are new to the package—but the way this area-based sidecountry explorer skis is its best quality. Stable, responsive, powerful. The new lower fits more generously over the midfoot. High-arched testers loved that.

**\$750** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 110  
HIKE MODE: YES

## NORDICA

This season Nordica returns to its roots and brings its historic A game of traditional four-buckle overlap boots in four last widths. From fully redesigned narrow boots like the course-ready Dobermann GP and all-mountain GPX lines to returning medium-fit NRGy and Belle models and wide-fit NXTs, each range bears a family mark of consistent fit, superior liner feel, and balanced stance angles for high-performance skiing. You won't find a hike mode in the bunch—that's not Nordica's thing—but the youthful Ace boots are ready to get after it in the park.



### LANGE RX 110 W LV

Testers liked the "soft and velvety" Thinsulate liner. It's comfortable but not at the expense of performance. This most recent RX—stiff, narrow, and ripping—features a perforated tongue that relieves pressure on nerves and blood vessels under the second buckle. A nice idea that solves a thorny problem.

**\$700** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 110  
HIKE MODE: NO



### NORDICA GPX 130

If high performance and precision top your checklist—and you have a trim foot—consider the all-new GPX. It replaces the Patron Pro with a lower shell and liner that are more relaxed up front, but it still grips nicely from the midfoot back. Its aggressively forward stance is built to move skiers down the hill at speed.

**\$799** LAST: 98 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### NORDICA NRGY PRO 1

Testers again liked the steady hand and solid spine of the returning NRGy, as well as the surprising edge power they could generate with such a comfy boot. Medium-wide feet were happiest, unlocking its snap by filling up its gaps, especially over the midfoot and instep, where it's roomy. Features are minimal: just what you need.

**\$749** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### NORDICA BELLE PRO 105

Another real skier's boot that stayed *right there* when testers pushed it, the Belle is stable at speed thanks to a firm flex. It performs well all over the hill with a solid feel on edge and a predictable roll arc-to-arc in any snow. Bonus: It doesn't sacrifice a cozy fit to get there. High marks for on-and-off ease as well.

**\$699** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 105  
HIKE MODE: NO





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# HEAD®

## ROSSIGNOL

The launch of the all-new Allspeed (men's) and Pure (women's) collections—each comprising three widths and the full range of flexes—impressed testers across all models encountered. These boots replace Rossi's previously successful but variously named fixed-cuff collections. The naming convention is simple: If there's an "Elite" in its name it's a narrow-fit 98-millimeter last. If there's a "Pro" it's a medium-fit 100. If it's just plain Allspeed or Pure it's a 102. Meanwhile, Rossi's hike-ready Alltrack models maintain momentum with fresh colors.



### ROSSIGNOL ALLSPEED ELITE 130

The Elite 130 ranked in a tie at the top of all the all-mountain boots tested. Testers said it was light and lively and skied with unbridled enthusiasm. It employs a uniquely ribbed spine construction that increases torsional rigidity while shaving weight. Many said the out-of-box shape was perfect without a lot of bootfitter work.

**\$850** LAST: 98 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### ROSSIGNOL ALLSPEED PRO 120

The Pro 120 was easy to put on yet race-boot-strong on edge. It fits close but without a hint of discomfort. Some of its strong skiability scores stem from the ribbed Sensor Blade spine construction—a surprisingly simple way to increase torsional rigidity while reducing weight. Testers thought it would serve a broad range of skiers well.

**\$700** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 120  
HIKE MODE: NO



### ROSSIGNOL ALLTRACK PRO 130 WTR

The Pro 130 remains a tester favorite. It's unstoppable downhill, partly due to an awesome fit that's well matched with the average-volume foot and nicely shaped in the problematic fit zones. Its smooth flex feels great and commands the ski with authority. This year it comes with swappable WTR (rockered) soles and regular alpine ones.

**\$850** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: YES



### ROSSIGNOL ALLTRACK PRO 110 W

Here's an Alltrack that's good looking and muscular, with easy entry and fur-trimmed comfort and style. "A down puffy for your foot," one tester said. Powered by its tall, upright cuff and even flex feel, it's unruffled in powder and crud. Be alert: It rewards an assertive driver, and laziness can be punished by a trip to the back seat.

**\$750** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 110  
HIKE MODE: YES

## ROXA

While Roxa's traditional four-buckle overlap jobs are what garner the best test results, the brand's lineup is unique and wide-ranging. It offers freeski/touring hybrids like the three-piece, tech-compatible, sole-rockered XFace and XTurn boots; alpine-soled, hike-enabled frontsidiers like Cliffnotes; and even jib-focused cabrios like the Freesoul (men's) and Jade (women's). Roxa has a match for virtually every application—especially now that the super-light, Grilamid-built, backcountry-based RX 1.0 is on the scene.



### ROXA EVO 120

Testers liked the open and anatomical feel through the toe box and forefoot, a big fit improvement for Roxa. They said it slotted right down the middle of the medium-width fit-tension range. This is a firm-feeling 120 flex, testers said, with a dense liner feel. Bigger guys appreciated the support.

**\$485** LAST: 99 MM / FLEX: 120  
HIKE MODE: YES



### ROXA BOLD 130

The Bold is a trenching machine with lots of spine and edge bite wrapped in a cushy, open-fitting Intuition liner. Despite its advertised 99-mm last, testers deemed it a medium fit, rather than narrow. That robs it of some quickness. But they were surprised by its power on firm snow. It's stable, solid, and aggressively priced.

**\$510** LAST: 99 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



### ROXA KARA 105

Bargain hunter? Aspiring ripper? You won't go wrong with the Kara 105, testers said. For a three-buckle boot, it delivers surprising power to the edge. It's not the quickest in the category turn-to-turn, but it still handles pretty much anything you can throw at it. Testers liked the easy-to-use walk mode, though its range of motion is a bit limited.

**\$385** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 105  
HIKE MODE: YES

## THE PH.DS OF FIT AND FLEX

You never saw such bunch of geeks as our boot testers. And we mean that in the nicest way. We're talking about the guys at Masterfit University, who travel the world teaching bootfitters how to fit boots. Sure, we could assemble a team of editors and ripping skiers and muddle through. But assessing boots takes knowledge that only the MFU guys possess. We're lucky to have them to run our test, and happy to underwrite their outrageous bar tabs at the Deschutes Brewery in Bend, Oregon. We only wish we could give them the room they demand for in-depth boot reviews. For that, there's the web: visit [skiingmag.com/gear/boots](http://skiingmag.com/gear/boots) for longer reviews of the boots you see here.



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## SALOMON

Yes, our test team was reminded again this year of how well the X Max and X Pro boots fit and ski. Our custom-technology testing program again pointed out how easily and well the Custom Shell 360 process evens out fit inconsistencies and can also improve stance and snow feel. But what our testers didn't expect was the lightweight power and crisp drive of the new Grilamid-and-Pebax Mountain Lab backcountry boot: tech-compatible, rockered, and ripping.



### SALOMON X MAX 120

A revised liner with a more contoured, anatomical shape in the ankle pockets and heel elevates the performance fit of the X Max. Testers put it on their short list for low-volume feet. Snug rear-foot grip enables aggressive, accurate moves. The 120 flex is solid without hammering shins. Heat-molding relaxes the shell for thicker feet.

**\$725** LAST: 98-104 MM / FLEX: 120 / HIKE MODE: NO



### SALOMON X PRO 130

This shape-shifting favorite shines both ways, as-is or post-molding. Some testers liked the firm grip of the stock setup's liner, which holds the heel and ankle tightly. Others cooked only the liner to ease that rearfoot grip. Most liked the full shell-and-liner cook job. Accurate fit led to high scores. Reliable, predictable, A-plus performance.

**\$850** LAST: 100-106 MM / FLEX: 130 / HIKE MODE: NO



### SALOMON X MAX 110 W

The X Max 110 was the overall favorite in the women's test. That's against some stiff competition. A new, more anatomically shaped liner was roundly applauded. The pre-formed liner fit and long-travel flex feel make for comfy but snappy performance. And thanks to its shell moldability, it works well for a lot of feet.

**\$725** LAST: 98-104 MM / FLEX: 110 / HIKE MODE: NO



### SALOMON X PRO 80 W

Soft flex, great value, and a top-tier ranking. The X Pro is comfortable enough to satisfy the softest lodge bunny, but testers put it through the grinder and this 80-flex didn't fold. The stance is aggressive but not quad-burning. The fit matches the curves of the (thicker) foot. And the shell is heat-moldable. A good option for many feet.

**\$475** LAST: 100-106 MM / FLEX: 80 / HIKE MODE: NO

## SCARPA

The female testers still love the Freedom SL—and our guys missed getting to ski it this year, though the award-winning 120-flex men's version is still available. There's more to love from Scarpa this year with the new Freedom RS—another featherweight freeride powerhouse with a massive touring range of motion. Meanwhile, the long-skinning Maestrale RS again held its own with backcountry testers.



### SCARPA FREEDOM RS

Despite its light weight, testers said the RS is the strongest of the alpine/AT hybrids. Its lower shell is lightweight Pebax Rnew plastic with a carbon-reinforced sole. Its polyamide-and-carbon cuff is tall and stout. It skis a bit edgy out of the box, but its extensive lateral cuff adjustment range can be used to find a more neutral setup.

**\$829** LAST: 101 MM / FLEX: 130 / HIKE MODE: YES



### SCARPA FREEDOM SL W

Racy power and quickness paired with lightweight tourability make this a BFF for skiers who venture OOB. The cuff's friction-free range of motion would stand out among true backcountry boots, but it's shocking in an all-mountain hybrid like this. The carbon-infused sole generates ridiculous amounts of power for such a light boot.

**\$779** LAST: 101 MM / FLEX: 120 / HIKE MODE: YES



### SCOTT G2 130 POWERFIT

In an era when performance boots are growing softer and more upright, the G2 is a welcome throwback. It's got a modern shape and liner construction, but its fit is tight and right, its forward lean aggressive. The G2 swallows the foot and lower leg like a boa constrictor. Brick strong and nanosecond quick for serious skiers.

**\$700** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 130 / HIKE MODE: NO



### SCOTT G2 90 POWERFIT M

Attention, chicks who rip. The G2 90 Powerfit M is stouter than its 90 flex rating suggests, with plenty of rearward backbone and a fit that grips in all the right spots yet leaves room for toe wiggling. It's lightweight and supple, but it generates serious juice to the edge. And this year's Ultralon foam liner is fully thermo-moldable.

**\$600** LAST: 97 MM / FLEX: 90 / HIKE MODE: NO



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at Neptune Mtnring**  
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**The Custom Foot**  
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**Boot Mechanics**  
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**Ski & Bow Rack**  
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Steamboat Springs  
**One Stop Ski Shop**  
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**Bootdoctors**  
(970) 728-8954

Vail  
**Skibootfitting Inc.  
at Vail & BC Sports**  
(802) 379-1014

Winter Park  
**Le Feet Lab**  
(970) 726-9841

#### Idaho

Sandpoint  
**Alpine Shop**  
(208) 263-5157

#### Montana

Big Sky  
**Grizzly Outfitters**  
(406) 995-2939

#### New Mexico

Taos Ski Valley  
**Bootdoctors**  
(575) 776-2489

#### Utah

Park City  
**Park City Boot Room**  
(435) 901-2562

Park City Ski Boot  
(435) 776-7883

Salt Lake City  
**Daleboot**  
(801) 487-3649

#### Wyoming

Jackson/Teton Village  
**Jackson Hole Sports**  
(307) 739-2687

### WEST

#### California

Berkeley  
**California Ski Co.**  
(510) 527-6411

Big Bear Lake  
**Goldsmith's  
Boardhouse**  
(909) 866-2728

Studio City  
**Ski Net Sports**  
(818) 505-1294

Truckee  
**Sports Hub**  
(530) 582-4510

#### Oregon

Mt. Bachelor  
**Gravity Sports  
at Mount Bachelor**  
(541) 382-2442 x2119

Portland  
**Next Adventure**  
(503) 233-0706

#### Washington

Seattle  
**Alpine Hut**  
(206) 284-3575



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# TECNICA

The Tecnica lineup looks good, feels good, and skis well too. Testers couldn't find a flaw in its boot-test game, which included podium performances from the likes of the Mach1 LV (low volume), the Mach1 MV (medium volume), and the returning hike-mode favorite, the Cochise Pro 130. The wider and softer side of Tecnica was well received also: The Ten.2's massive instep room and open calf fit are nice to have in a wide boot that skis like the real deal.



## TECNICA MACH1 130 LV

Rarely is a blockbuster sequel as good as the original. But the new 130 LV bests its wider MV sibling and tops the category. It's slim-fitting, but a unique, dimpled shell and liner construction makes it exceptionally easy to stretch and grind. The LV serves up a perfect balance of power and flex and is just plain fun to ski.

**\$840** LAST: 98 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



## TECNICA MACH1 130 MV

Testers lusted after this easy-fitting, strong-skiing, go-everywhere and do-everything four-buckle overlap. The punchable, grindable liner and shell are easily tailored with traditional bootfitting tools. Most important, our pro bootfitters said they could make space in common trouble zones while leaving the rest of the beautifully shaped fit alone.

**\$840** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



## TECNICA COCHISE PRO 130

The Cochise offers an effective combination of fit, skiability, convenient cuff release, and long range of motion. It's dead center in narrow-class fit tension, with grip and relief zoned perfectly. It can hang on frontside boilerplate or float in untracked pow. Heading off-piste? The cuff's range of travel is long and low-friction.

**\$840** LAST: 98 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: YES



## TECNICA MACH1 105 W MV

The 105 topped the fit and performance charts for all women's boots. It may be the most anatomically formed boot since the leather era. Bootfitters love its easy-to-tweak CAS shell and liner. It can be perfectly sculpted to an individual foot shape for a precision fit with rapid response and extreme comfort. That's a neat trick.

**\$720** LAST: 100 MM / FLEX: 105  
HIKE MODE: NO

# ZAY

Zay is small-batch, a little limited in sizes, and still tricky to find, but its boots are unusually powerful and agile. The hallmark radial-closure cable system manages fit and flex simultaneously.



## ZAY ZR 130

Dare-to-be-different Zay goes buckle-less and instead secures the foot with a forefoot-wrapping cable closure that also manages flex. The shell's unique "cast molding" process creates a light, lively feel while remaining laterally and torsionally stout. A new liner helped improve its entry and exit scores (it's still a bit tricky) while easing hot zones.

**\$849** LAST: 98 MM / FLEX: 130  
HIKE MODE: NO



Emily Poore going down on Upper Snapshot Alley, Mt. Bachelor.



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# OUTERWEAR

'CAUSE YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE ON A BLIZZARD IN YOUR BIRTHDAY SUIT.

BY KEVIN LUBY | PHOTOS BY KERI BASCETTA



GG 15-16 — APPAREL

## ► THE NORTH FACE BRIGANDINE

**Jacket:** FuseForm technology weaves fabrics of different densities, durabilities, and, new for 2016, elasticities without the need for sewn seams. The result is a lighter, cleaner, and more durable construction. It's tough where you need it to be, light where you don't. **[\$499]**

**Pants:** With abrasion-resistant fabrics on the knees and ankles melded with lightweight materials in less exposed areas, these pants are versatile, sturdy, and comfortable. Waterproof and breathable, these hardshell pants are equally suited for sweating up the skin track and crushing hot laps at the resort. **[\$399]**

SHELL

## ► FLYLOW GENIUS COAT + IQ PANT

**Jacket:** Flylow's mad design scientists have once again pushed what's possible in lightweight apparel with the Genius Coat. Trimmed of every ounce of fat and intended specifically for backcountry use—hello, pack- and skin-friendly pockets—this jacket is for those who find solace in the uphill. **[\$400]** **Pants:** Pockets? Check: two hand and two thigh. Vents? For sure: inner thigh, to bring A/C to the important bits. Otherwise, these Polartec NeoShell pants are trimmed to bare essentials for maximum maneuverability. **[\$370]**

SHELL

## ► MARMOT CERRO TORRE JACKET + STORM KING PANT

**Jacket:** Why add gizmos when a reliable Gore-Tex membrane, good pockets, and generous pit zips will do? Marmot takes this simple but idiotproof approach with the Cerro Torre. It's gear that works without the B.S. **[\$450]**

**Pants:** These brilliant touring pants—or anywhere pants, really—are made from a four-way stretch softshell material that's wonderfully breathable and water-resistant enough to withstand all but the wettest climes. Though it's a breathable softshell, we dig the thigh vents for when we're charging uphill. **[\$425]**

SHELL





► **WESTCOMB** APOC JACKET +  
**FLYLOW** COMPOUND PANT 2.0

**Jacket:** The Apoc features the new Polartec NeoShell membrane for maximum breathability with protection. It's a light and minimal shell with a helmet-compatible hood, interior media pocket, and sleeve pass pocket. The Made-in-Canada story adds a warm-fuzzy touch too. **[\$500]** **Pants:** Inner-thigh vents and nearly full-length side vents dump heat—think spring touring. Plus a Polartec NeoShell membrane and Flylow's durable construction make it bombproof. **[\$370]**

— SHELL —

► **DYNAFIT** YOTEI

**Jacket:** Surprise! One of the world's foremost ski-touring brands makes one of the world's foremost ski-touring jackets. Using Gore's new C-Knit fabric, a more durable version of its lightest laminates, the Yotei captures the spirit of backcountry in a tough, dependable package. **[\$600]** **Pants:** Pants take a beating in the backcountry. Luckily, the durable Gore-Tex C-Knit fabric also finds its way into the Yotei Pant to better defend against errant tree branches and rocky ridgelines. The zip-off bibs, reinforced hem, and adjustable cuff round out a solid feature set. **[\$550]**

— SHELL —

► **BLACK DIAMOND** MISSION PRO

**Jacket:** Gore-Tex Pro shell, the company's most durable fabric and most waterproof laminate, is the elemental shield in this jacket, and its pocket game is on-point with multiple well-designed options for phone, wallet, and pass. It's a cleverly designed package for the diehard hardshell-jacket wearer. **[\$699]** **Pants:** Thanks to BD's acquisition of Pieps, the Mission Pro pants feature a smart beacon pocket complete with padding and a retention system. For those late to the party, a beacon in a specially designed pocket beats a beacon on a chest sling. Try it. Love it. **[\$549]**

— SHELL —

# OUTERWEAR

'CAUSE SOMETIMES YOU NEED A LITTLE  
EXTRA HEAT TO MAKE IT BELL TO BELL.



GG 15-16 — APPAREL

## ► HELLY HANSEN BACKBOWL JACKET + ELEVATE SHELL PANT

**Jacket:** Outlast any storm with premium features like the offset zipper—to save irritation on the chin—and the H2Flow mechanical venting system—for better temperature regulation. This is an insanely comfortable jacket on cold days. We also dig the beefed-up Velcro cuff closure. **[\$400]** **Pants:** Helly's waterproof-breathable Hellytech Pro shell goes right up against the fabrics offered by Gore and Polartec. The thigh vent—toward the back of the leg for more heat exhaust—is absolutely ingenious. **[\$400]**

INSULATED

## ► OUTDOOR RESEARCH UBERLAYER JACKET + BLACKPOWDER PANT

**Jacket:** The Uberlayer features light, breathable Polartec Alpha insulation. Designed with the ventilation needs of high-energy skiers in mind, it'll work well as touring outerwear, but you might want to pop on a hardshell in the resort. **[\$299]** **Pants:** We're glad to see the return of tradition in the Blackpowder. Old-school kneepads offer insulation and protection, and it has the waterproof-breathable thing covered too. **[\$250]**

INSULATED

## ► ARC'TERYX FISSILE JACKET + CASSIAR PANT

**Jacket:** A three-layer Gore-Tex shell with strategic insulation—down here, synthetic there: The Fissile's one of the best-thought-out insulated pieces on the market. Arc'teryx quality comes at a price, but if you ski no matter what the temp, this jacket's for you. **[\$875]** **Pants:** Light stretch and flannel lining make these trim pants a hipster-woodsman-skier's dream (probably his girlfriend's dream too). Gore-Tex keeps the wet out; softshell offers airflow when you hit the skin track. Ski alpinism meets metro cool in the Cassiar. **[\$475]**

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Protect Your Gear!

# OUTERWEAR

'CAUSE JACK FROST WILL NIP AT MORE THAN JUST YOUR NOSE.



GG 15-16 — APPAREL

## ► ARMADA RESOLUTION 3L

**Jacket:** The Resolution is Armada's most performance-focused piece for women. It's highly technical, with Gore's new 3L C-Knit fabric, a light, breathable shell with improved durability, a Recco reflector, and a helmet-compatible hood. It's touring-inspired, but it maintains a nice freeride fit. **[\$500]** **Pants:** A softer material with a touch of stretch goes a long way with the Vista Pant. There are no pinch points or hangups as you move, and because it uses a Gore-Tex membrane, there's no fear of elemental penetration, especially when paired with the Resolution jacket; the two snap together to make one protective unit. **[\$300]**

— SHELL —

## ► ORTOVOX GUARDIAN

**Jacket:** Ortovox's outerwear line is new to the North American market, but it comes in swinging with intelligent takes on the typical high-dollar hardshell. We like its odor-fighting, moisture-regulating merino-wool lining and fresh, poppy, color-blocked look. **[\$749]** **Pants:** Ortovox outerwear is all about wool, specifically Swisswool, and the ever-so-light merino lining is a nice touch to these pants. And while it takes a little getting used to, the "bib," which is secured by an oversize, adjustable elastic strap, is dang near impenetrable. Snowy crack is a thing of the past. **[\$699]**

— SHELL —

## ► PATAGONIA KNIFERIDGE

**Jacket:** Get to a certain level of competence and frequency in the backcountry and you're gonna want a softshell. The breathability, especially at high aerobic output, of more permeable fabrics is undeniable. Thankfully the new Kniferidge uses Polartec's top-of-the-line fabric for softshell breathability and weather protection. **[\$449]** **Pants:** With its seamless integration, the Kniferidge Pant offers maximum breathability with minimal sacrifice to waterproofing, removable suspenders, and a cut that's designed for efficient movement in the mountains. **[\$379]**

— SHELL —





#### ► SCOTT VERTIC 3L

**Jacket:** Its colorful palette and feminine cut belie the true selling point of this jacket: durability. While many other companies are trying to go lighter and faster, this waterproof and breathable Gore-Tex jacket strikes a balance for the hard-charging gal who wants to look great too. **[\$525]** **Pants:** The Vertic pants are about personalization, with a detachable bib and adjustable waist, leg gaiters, and hem. It's also about skiing fast and taking chances, knowing your kit can take some abuse. Gore-Tex provides the weatherproofing in these pants. You provide the fun. **[\$450]**

— SHELL —

#### ► ROXY WILDER JACKET + RUSHMORE PANT

**Jacket:** With a plush lining around the neck, Lycra wrist gaiters, and the perfect amount of insulation, Roxy has the cozy thing dialed. Huddle up in this Gore-Tex jacket and outlast any kind of weather. Roxy, a women-specific brand, has another thing dialed too: style. It ain't just another solid-colored hardshell. **[\$330]** **Pants:** With Gore-Tex, Thinsulate insulation, fleece-lined seat and knees, and thigh vents, these are affordable pants with a flattering cut. Plus they have a pocket that will work well with the automatic lift-ticket readers that are starting to pop up stateside. **[\$280]**

— INSULATED —

#### ► STRAFE CLOUD NINE

**Jacket:** Some gals want tech in their jackets and some need insulation. The Cloud Nine covers both. Polartec NeoShell pairs with Polartec Alpha insulation make a lightweight, warm, and surprisingly breathable jacket. Plus, it's supes adorbs. **[\$425]** **Pants:** Like its matching jacket, the Cloud Nine Pant uses the warm, waterproof, and breathable NeoShell and Alpha combination, and it's got all the features that matter: inner-thigh vents, scuff guards at the ankle, a performance-driven yet flattering fit, and a fleecy liner in the rump and at the knees—a particularly nice touch. **[\$350]**

— INSULATED —

# MIDLAYERS

'CAUSE LAYERS LET YOU EXPLORE MORE, NO MATTER WHAT MOTHER NATURE HAS TO SAY.

BY SAMANTHA BERMAN | PHOTOS BY CHARLIE HUMPAL



## ► EDDIE BAUER MICROTHERM

This ultralight piece is as warm as it is light, but what makes this 800-fill down jacket the ideal active insulator is Eddie Bauer's proprietary StormDown water-resistant insulation, so the Microtherm won't lose its loft when damp. You'll keep that ever-important insulation and warmth even when Old Man Winter is on the warpath. **[\$199]**

## ► ARMADA GREMLIN HOODY

Unleash the Gremlin and wear this street-worthy jacket beneath a shell or by itself on milder days. It's filled with 60 grams of PrimaLoft Gold, meaning it will keep its shape, hold its own on damp days, and do a fine job of keeping your core happy no matter the conditions. Pack it into its own pocket when you don't need it. **[\$180]**

## ► SALOMON

### S LAB X ALP MIDLAYER HOODIE

The X Alp features a level of breathability during ascents that's matched only by its wicking, wind protection, and thermal regulation on descents. With its Polartec PowerGrid construction and stretch fleece at the wrists, chest, and hood, the X Alp will be your go-to backcountry layer. Period. **[\$160]**



## ► MAMMUT TRIFT

The Trift's Technostretch outer fabric boasts a four-way give that truly moves with you, while the inner polyester lining does a fine job of wicking and breathing as needed. Backpack-compatible pockets, two-way zippers, and a drawstring hood make the Trift a fine backcountry companion for any adventure. **[\$200]**

## ► ATOMIC RIDGELINE HYBRID DOWN INSULATOR

Always cold? The Ridgeline Insulator is made for you. Packed with PrimaLoft Silver Down Blend, which combines synthetic fibers with white duck down, it retains all the best qualities of down (packable, warm, lofty, breathable) and loses the rest (stays warm when wet, dries faster). **[\$300]**

## ► MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR SNOWPASS FLEECE

This super-cozy number feels like a fleece blanket—and won't make you look like the Goodyear Blimp. The space-dye design is subtle, with a bit of ruching along the hem to minimize your rear. Sleek and affordable, it may be your new fave fleece—for skiing and everything else. **[\$70]**





# SNOW and *Family*

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*Lee Cohen*

*Professional Photographer*



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# HELMETS

PROTECT YOUR MELON.

By Greg Ditrinco

Photos by Keri Bascetta



## 1 > BERN HEPBURN

Bern launches the Hepburn, its first women's snow-specific helmet, this season. Taking cues from the Rollins, the Hepburn uses an internal venting system that allows for thinner shell walls and a lower profile, which all translates to a lighter load. **[\$129]**

## 2 > SCOTT SYMBOL

The new go-everywhere Symbol features integrated MIPS protection, aggressive front venting, and a fully padded, non-itchy chin strap. It's earphone-compatible for those flat-light days that require some tunes. **[\$200]**

## 3 > K2 STASH

The new streamlined Stash is super-light for comfortable all-day ripping. The removable full-wrap liner system pops out for a quick wash and welcomes your beanie. A fit dial and neat magnetic goggle keeper round out a well-designed package. **[\$150]**

## 4 > SMITH PIVOT

The low-profile Pivot offers a warm, wind-blocking liner and a snug, secure fit for those high-speed turns. The durable multi-impact shell provides ongoing protection if you haven't reached the top of your learning curve. **[\$120]**

## 5 > PRET CYNIC X

The Cynic X offers one of the most comfy wool-blend liners on the market, with full venting for no-hands temperature control on the move. Equipped with MIPS, it earns extra credit for the mega-easy magnetic chin-strap closure. **[\$140]**

## 6 > GIRO RANGE

Giro is looking to end helmet head-bang once and for all with its new Range helmet. A two-piece shell design and semi-flexible construction conform to your melon. And the dial-to-size wheel customizes the fit. Thumbs up for the elastic no-fumble goggle keeper. **[\$240]**

## 7 > POC AURIC

A collaboration with athlete Aaron Blunck, the new Auric provides increased protection for the ear and temple areas. The lightweight shell is beefier in key impact zones, offers adjustable padding for comfort, and is beanie-friendly. **[\$120]**

## 8 > SHRED SLAM-CAP

Shred continues to set the helmet bar high for minimalist on-snow aesthetics with the Slam-Cap. Its in-molded design and honeycomb structure lower weight but not safety standards. The hardly-there topper makes it easy to forget what's on your head. **[\$160]**



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IT UNLESS YOU HAVE A CLEAR MESSAGE."

- CO-FOUNDER, BRADFORD PETERSON



WE WANT YOU TO BUY OUR  
MITTS!

~ **ASTIS**  
STAY WARM. STAY POSITIVE.

# GOGGLES

KEEP SEEING. KEEP SKIING.

By Greg Ditrinco

## 1> ZEAL FARGO

The Fargo covers all the bases: triple-layer foam, full UV protection, anti-fog infusion. It's designed for small faces. And at this price it won't have you worrying if you leave it at the bar. Bonus patriotic points for the all-American red, white, and blue vibe. **[\$49]**

## 2> ABOM, INC. ABOM

Foggy goggles blow. Abom aims to end that chronic buzzkill by making a goggle that works like your car's heated side-view mirror. A battery sends a current to a conductive film between the dual lenses to heat the surface, ending fog's hazy reign. **[\$250]**

## 3> JULBO AEROSPACE

The Aerospace wants you clearheaded on the way up *and* the way down. The lens can be pulled slightly away from the frame when you're sweating on the climb, creating a vent. Just like cracking a window in your car. **[\$220]**

## 4> BERN JACKSON

Consider the Jackson the Baby Bear's chair of goggles. Not too big. Not too small. But just right for those who prefer a medium-size frame. And it's an easy twist to change out the lens. **[\$90]**

## 5> SMITH I/O

Smith launches its new female-friendly I/O goggle with the help of omni-ripper Angel Collinson. Funky graphics, an easy-release lens system, and Angel's evocation of the "cosmic powers of the universe" have to help your skiing. **[\$175]**

## 6> OAKLEY FLIGHT DECK

Oakley downsized its popular Flight Deck to a smaller format, but the rimless design still provides wide-screen views of your battle lines. The Prizm technology handles a range of conditions to minimize switching lenses. **[\$240]**

## 7> SHRED TASTIC

Designed for small faces but still big on attitude, the Femme Fatale Tastic goggle offers a lightweight, flexible frame for comfort with an antifog hydrophilic treatment so you can see while also being seen. A girl has to have her glitter, after all. **[\$130]**





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800-748-4754 [skisolitude.com](http://skisolitude.com)



# GLOVES

## GET A GRIP.

By Greg Ditrinco

### 1 > OR EXTRAVERT

The Extravert isn't shy about its athlete-influenced redesign, emphasizing comfort for the skin up and the powder run down. Pre-curved construction, a feather-light stretch shell, and a wool liner make it a go-to for all but the coldest days. And love the price. **[\$75]**

### 2 > ARC'TERYX LITHIC

The new Lithic is top-shelf from cuff to fingertips, with hydrophobic materials that keep hands warm and desert-dry. Construction is bulletproof, with an obsessive attention to detail. **[\$249]**

### 3 > HESTRA ERGO GRIP PATROL

If you were to attend an IPO launch on the mountain, these are the gloves you would wear. A silky-smooth premium leather outer combined with a stout Army goat-leather palm conspire for an angel-investor look but with the dexterity to pick up loose change. **[\$190]**

### 4 > FLYLOW UPSLOPE

Partnering with Colorado's Upslope Brewery, Flylow has updated its tough-as-rebar work glove. The pigskin palm and gauntlet cuff of 1,000-denier Cordura (tear-resistant, big-time) works wonders for tight tree shots, changing your car battery in the parking lot, and downing a shot without spillage. **[\$70]**

### 5 > DAKINE TITAN

The new mega-warm Titan wants you to go big, not go home. Earning the new +Warm rating, it features a waterproof shell and wrist and gauntlet clinches to keep pow in its place. A stash pocket is perfect for goodies or heat packs. Style value, too. **[\$75]**

### 6 > ORTOVOX FREERIDE

These gloves are as comfortable as a chat between old friends. With Swiss-wool linings, whisper-light design, and self-sizing wristbands, they'll become your new best buddies. **[\$135]**

### 7 > SCOTT MTN FREE 15 GT PL

We've moved beyond our three-finger bigotry. The Mtn Free mitt opened our minds. Back-of-hand padding, a snug Velcro-close cuff, a comfy leather outer, the warmth of a mitt, and the ability to fiddle with boots on the move closed the deal. **[\$120]**







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# PACKS

OUT THE GATE OR ON A PLANE.

By Paddy O'Connell

## 1 > MAMMUT

### NIRVANA FLIP 18

A small pack for big days. The new offering from Mammut is a sleek, compact 18-liter pack for lift-served backcountry day trips. Tiny in build but big on features, it has a compartment that accommodates Mammut's largest shovel blade, probe, and saw; fully opening back access; nifty diagonal ski carry (straps are hidden internally); and a sleeve for a hydration system. **[\$120]**

## 2 > DAKINE

### HELI PRO DLX 24L

For the Heli Pack series's 20th birthday, Dakine is introducing a new women's version to reflect the needs of the female backcountry skier. (Nothing is worse than having to use a floppy man bag while laying down a lady shred.) The women-specific fit has narrower shoulders and lumbar zone, a wider range in the sternum strap, and a canted waist belt to conform to smaller waists and wider hips. The tech details include multiple ski-carry options and easy avy-tool and cargo access. **[\$110]**

## 3 > OSPREY

### SHUTTLE

A skier's life is one of travel. Whether by plane or Subaru, we follow the snow. Osprey's new rolling duffel makes hauling the gear that helps get the goods easier. It features a large volume with a low profile, a large collapsible zippered lower pocket (complete with drain hole) for wet gear, boots, and hardware, and more pockets than an Old Navy with a cargo-shorts sale. 130 L/36" **[\$320]** or 100L/30" **[\$290]**







# PLAY WITH POWER

ALLSPEED, featuring an **all-new** fully-customizable and streamlined design, offers the essential boot-fitting elements to ensure optimized comfort and performance for every foot shape. Power, precision, comfort, control - everything begins in the foot.

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Volcanic activity, not  
tectonic upthrust, formed  
eastern Montana's remote  
Bear Paw Mountains.



The shrouded flanks of Baldy  
Mountain remain sacred to  
the Cree, who venture to its  
summit for vision quests.







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# Sacred Snow

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**MONTANA'S REMOTE ROCKY BOY RESERVATION, HOME TO THE CHIPPEWA CREE, MIGHT SEEM AN UNLIKELY PLACE FOR SKIING. BUT ON THE SLOPES OF BEAR PAW SKI BOWL, POWDER MEETS PURPOSE.**

BY DREW POGGE

PHOTOS BY RYAN KRUEGER

*"Rack the boards, rack up some runs. Rack up some fun and ski knee-deep, cheap, at the steep-and-deep Bear Paw Ski Bowl!"*

The local radio ad comes on just as we turn onto the main drag in the small northern-Montana ranching and railroad town of Havre, where the skis on our roof seem a little ridiculous, surrounded as we are by muddy diesel pickups, farm vehicles, and rust-streaked grain elevators.

*"Conditions this weekend are great, with 12 inches of fresh powder on a boilerplate base. We open at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow—not whenever you feel like it, Melody."*

The man on the radio is Bear Paw Ski Bowl mountain manager Big Dave Martens, and even though he just used the word "boilerplate" in a ski-area conditions report and publicly scolded one of Bear Paw's patrollers, his booming baritone has a grin behind it, as if everybody listening is in on the joke. And given where we are, it's possible he's right.

It's not a stretch to say that Bear Paw Ski Bowl is the most unusual and isolated ski area in the country. It's in the middle of Montana's vast eastern plain—140 miles

east of the Rocky Mountain Front; 60 miles south of the Canadian border; and inside the Rocky Boy Reservation, home of the Chippewa Cree (Bear Paw is one of just two ski areas in the country operating on tribal land). The entire region is so remote, in fact, that it's still officially designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as "frontier," a place with fewer than six people per square mile.

The ski area is open just two days a week, run entirely by a local nonprofit and staffed mostly by volunteers. A big day might bring 100 people to the hill. The base area consists of an outhouse and a plywood ticket office. Lift tickets are \$20 (\$15 for tribe members), and don't even try to pay with a credit card. There's one lift, serving 900 windswept vertical feet, and even the most ardent supporter of the ski area would call the annual snowfall "iffy."

And yet Bear Paw Ski Bowl has somehow survived for 55 years. Photographer Ryan Krueger and I are here to see how such an improbable ski area keeps the bullwheel turning and meet some of the skiers who call it home.



**THE NEXT MORNING,** we sit down to an enormous breakfast at a Havre diner called Char's before driving 29 scenic miles south to the slopes. In the course of the drive, the landscape changes from rolling prairie and pasture to foothills pocked with ponds and trees. We parallel Beaver Creek, where cottonwoods, aspens, and buffalo berry thrive beneath crumbling cliffs. At one point, a large coyote lopes across the icy road and stares as we pass. The last few miles to Bear Paw climb gently into lodgepole forest, and the mountains grow steeper. We catch our first glimpse of the ski runs—dusted by another five inches of new snow on top of the 12 from last night—from a small valley below the streaked north face of 6,916-foot Baldy Mountain, which looms over Bear Paw, visible from every vantage.

Unlike the dramatic Rocky Mountains to the west, the Bear Paws were formed by volcanic activity rather than tectonic collision. An upwelling of magma around 50 million years ago pushed the Bear

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**IT'S NOT A STRETCH TO SAY THAT BEAR PAW SKI BOWL IS THE MOST UNUSUAL AND ISOLATED SKI AREA IN THE COUNTRY. IT'S IN THE MIDDLE OF MONTANA'S VAST EASTERN PLAIN—A REGION SO REMOTE THAT IT'S STILL OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED AS "FRONTIER."**

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Paws 4,000 feet above the surrounding prairie and created the unique skyline—rounded summits and square-topped buttes—that defines the range. To the Cree, this profile bore resemblance to a crouching bear, with Baldy as the bear's heart. Its name in Cree is *O-che-ah-chi-nahs-ik*, or Heart Butte. The peak remains sacred to the tribe and is a site for traditional vision quests and reflection.

We pull into the small parking lot and gear up just as the lift starts turning. At the ticket shack, I ask for Big Dave, and a large, smiling man in wraparound sunglasses bursts from the side door. He greets us with a firm handshake and the same booming baritone from the radio. "So you're the magazine guys, huh?" he asks, with not a little incredulity. "Welcome to Bear Paw!" Apparently, out-of-town skiers—not to mention ski journalists—are rare at the Ski Bowl.

He shouts to a patroller at the lift to wait for us, then sends us on our way. "You'll figure it out pretty quick," he says before turning to greet a grinning local skier with a jovial "Hey, ya bastard!"

It turns out the patroller waiting for us at the lift is Big Dave's son, Little Dave, who has recently returned to Havre to work as a speech pathologist after

ski-bumming in Missoula for a few years while going to school. When I ask him to compare skiing here to his experiences elsewhere, he smiles. "It's different," he says. "Obviously it's not a huge mountain, and our snow can be terrible, but it's not really about that. We're just lucky to have anything at all."

Under the double chair, two kids in Carhartts stem-christie doggedly through the powder while someone a few chairs ahead shouts encouragement. We pass the midway unload ramp and continue up a steep headwall to the top, where rows of seven-foot-tall snow fence stand guard against the wind that often strafes this island range on the prairie.

From the top, a 360-degree view stretches to distant horizons. Baldy rises another 1,100 vertical feet to the southeast, while rolling hills dissipate to the plains in the west. Today, the egg-shaped summits sparkle with a foot and a half of fresh snow, and spirits are high. Someone just below the ridge is laughing as we unload from the lift.

Veteran liftie Lance DeCora shovels drifted snow out of the unloading area. He and two other tribal lift operators from Rocky Boy are the only paid employees at



CLOCKWISE: Very few members of the tribe take advantage of the skiing at Bear Paw, where uncrowded slopes offer views of omnipresent Baldy; Big Dave, who never forgets to smile when he's ragging on someone, manages to mingle work and skiing. The payoff: outdoor fun for the region's future rippers.





Bear Paw; part of the deal struck with the reservation was a few part-time winter jobs. “The tribe doesn’t get much out of this at all,” Little Dave explains. “So a few jobs is the least we can do.”

Lance is friendly, but he doesn’t seem to want to talk. He’s got work to do.

Dave leads us downhill. We wiggle onto a run called Four Souls—a fall-line pitch that’s steep enough to be challenging and deep enough to be fun—dodging a few groups of kids in various stages of yard sale. A few older skiers swoop down the moderately pitched run-out on skinny carving skis. I see at least two people sporting pants tucked into ski boots. Everyone, however, is thoroughly enjoying the snow and sunshine. It’s a refreshing departure from the greedy, radder-than-thou rat race of larger resorts.

The idea to build a ski hill on the Rocky Boy Reservation took root in the 1950s, according to Alvin Windy Boy Sr., tribe historian and former chairman of the Chippewa Cree. The tribe first built a rope tow at the Ski Bowl in 1960, when the ski area was part of a larger economic stimulus plan that included picnic areas, lodging, and trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. The tribe ran it for almost 20 years. There was a base lodge at one time, but it burned down in the late ’80s. The chairlift was added in 1976.

But then the tribe got out of the skiing business. In 1978, it handed off operations to a group of skiers in Havre, the Snow Dance Ski Association. And that’s when Big Dave and his merry band got involved.

**AFTER A FEW LAPS WE MEET CLAIRE STONER**, who has been the president of the Snow Dance Ski Association for more than 20 years. In many ways she’s responsible for keeping Bear Paw afloat, but she’d never tell you that. She’s happy to give Big Dave the



The top shack is manned by Lance DeCora, a tribe member and one of only three paid employees at the Ski Bowl.

**THE IDEA TO BUILD A SKI HILL ON THE ROCKY BOY CHIPPEWA CREE RESERVATION TOOK ROOT IN THE 1950S. THE TRIBE RAN IT FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS. THERE WAS A BASE LODGE AT ONE TIME, BUT IT BURNED DOWN IN THE LATE ’80S. THE CHAIRLIFT WAS ADDED IN 1976.**



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credit. "Dave, he's the glue," she says. "If it wasn't for Dave, the hill wouldn't exist."

We take a run down Z Trail and join a gang of preteens hitting a kicker built over a length of plastic snow fence. One lands a 360 and a crowd of all ages erupts into applause. Back on the lift, Claire fills me in on how Bear Paw operates—which is unlike virtually any other ski area, anywhere.

In the beginning it was just Dave and a few diehard skiers, Claire explains. And from the beginning, it's always depended on volunteers. "It's all for the love of skiing," she says. "We do what we can with what we have. Everything we make goes back into the ski area—maintaining a fully certified unpaid ski patrol, paying for insurance, electricity, and equipment maintenance. It's really about the people, the atmosphere. It's about fun."

It's also about giving local kids something to do during the long Montana winters. "We're sort of keeping the place going for the kids," Claire says. "Everybody looks out for everybody." Bear Paw has even produced a mountain celebrity: climber, skier, photographer, and IFMGA-certified guide Kris Erickson, who was born in Havre and learned to ski here. "We had to kick Kris out once," Big Dave tells me. "He jumped the midway unloading ramp. We can't have that."

I ask Claire why there aren't more skiers from Rocky Boy at Bear Paw, and she directs me to patroller Shannon Howland, who teaches physical education and health at the Rocky Boy elementary school. Shannon tells me she would love to get a weekend ski program started for her students to help encourage healthy, active lifestyles on the reservation. People living on Rocky Boy have the highest rate of heart disease in the state, she says. They're also three times more likely to have diabetes and more than twice as likely to be obese than non-Native American Montanans.

But she recognizes the challenges. "There's no gear rental or lessons," for

instance. So to get equipment, people who live on the reservation have to go all the way to Havre. "Plus, even with \$15 lift tickets, that's just money that many people don't have." According to the 2011 U.S. Census, the average household income on Rocky Boy was \$27,000. And in the winter, when expenses are greatest, unemployment hovers around 70 percent. Lift tickets just aren't affordable for many people on the reservation.

All of this makes Bear Paw's survival that much more amazing. Few members of the tribe use or benefit from the ski area, but without tribal support it would be abandoned. "We're incredibly lucky that Rocky Boy shares this area with us," Big Dave tells me. "It's a tremendous gift to the community."

That word, *community*, begins to resonate particularly strongly at the end of the day. After the lift closes, volunteers gather for beer and conversation in the little warming hut near the base—a tradition they call "Bible study." It's a celebration of skiing, and of each other, and of another successful day on the mountain. They welcome Ryan and me as if we've been here all season.

Afterward, while walking back to the parking lot with Big Dave, I glance up at the slopes of Baldy, which looms above Bear Paw's still, silent chairlift. Both are special mountains; both highly valued and important; both deserving of respect.

"I'll keep doing this until I can't anymore," Big Dave tells me, as serious as I've seen him. He looks across the tiny base area. "It's just a great group of people. We've got a nice little hill here." ♦

**Drew Pogge** is a longtime *Skiing* contributor, former editor-in-chief of *Backcountry*, and owner of Bell Lake Yurt in Bozeman, Montana, where he is a ski guide and avalanche educator. His favorite thing about Bear Paw? "People were laughing constantly," he says. "Everyone up there knows how to have a good time."

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